

GAO

Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee
on Civil Service, Committee on
Government Reform and Oversight,
House of Representatives

June 1995

FEDERAL HIRING

Reconciling Managerial Flexibility With Veterans' Preference





United States
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General Government Division

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The Honorable John L. Mica
Chairman, Subcommittee on Civil Service
Committee on Government Reform and
Oversight
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This report, prepared at the request of the former Chairman, Subcommittee on Civil Service, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, reviews federal hiring procedures to identify those which are working, those which are not, and whether current efforts to reform the hiring process address the needs of agencies and applicants.

We are sending copies of this report to the Director, Office of Personnel Management, and interested congressional committees. Copies will also be made available to others upon request.

The major contributors to this report are listed in appendix VIII. Please contact me on (202) 512-5074 if you have any questions.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Nancy R. Kingsbury'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, flowing 'y' at the end.

Nancy R. Kingsbury
Director
Federal Human Resource Management
Issues

Executive Summary

Purpose

The government's ability to serve the public is directly affected by the quality of people it employs. Past studies have shown, however, that federal hiring procedures have often (1) impeded managers' attempts to hire quality people when they were needed and (2) frustrated applicants for federal employment.

Concerned about the adequacy of the federal hiring process, the former Chairman of the Subcommittee on the Civil Service, House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, asked GAO to determine which procedures are working, those which are not, and whether current efforts to reform the hiring process address the needs of agencies and applicants.

Background

The federal hiring process consists of over a dozen different legal authorities or mechanisms that managers can use to fill vacancies, depending on the qualifications of the candidate and the type of position being filled. These mechanisms generally have four phases in common: (1) a recruitment phase, where job openings are publicized and candidates can be identified; (2) an application phase, where candidates apply for federal positions; (3) a referral phase, where applicants are examined and the names of qualified candidates are referred to agency selecting officials (managers who make hiring decisions); and (4) a selection phase, where the selecting official chooses the desired candidates from among the best qualified.

Hiring practices must comply with applicable legal requirements, such as merit principles, veterans' preference, the Rule of Three, and equal employment opportunity. Merit principles require agencies to, among other things, select candidates solely on the basis of relative ability, knowledge, and skills, as determined through fair and open competition. To help compensate eligible veterans for their military service, Congress authorized giving veterans either 5 or 10 additional points on their examination scores for most external hiring actions. The Rule of Three, a component of veterans' preference legislation, requires selecting officials, when considering individuals from a list of rated and ranked candidates, to choose from among the top three candidates. Unless a request is approved to pass over a veteran for reasons of qualifications or suitability, a manager may not select a nonveteran over a higher ranking veteran. Equal employment opportunity prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, sex, color, religion, national origin, and disability.

Prior GAO work has examined the effectiveness of the government's recruitment activities (see Related GAO Products on p. 96). To complete the picture of the federal hiring process and determine what is needed to make federal hiring procedures more responsive to agency hiring officials and applicants, GAO reviewed several ongoing reform initiatives. For example, under its personnel demonstration project authority, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is testing the feasibility of giving managers more flexibility in recruiting and hiring decisions at selected sites of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Further, in 1994, OPM introduced full-scale automation of the examining process in all of its service centers.

Additional reforms have been proposed by the National Performance Review (NPR), the administration's taskforce on reinventing government. The September 1993 NPR report recommended decentralizing the hiring process by authorizing agencies to establish their own recruitment and examining programs and by abolishing centralized registers and standard application forms. To date, OPM has implemented NPR's call to abolish centralized registers and standard application forms.

GAO also mailed questionnaires to approximately 2,200 internal and external customers of the federal hiring process. GAO defined internal customers as agency personnelists and selecting officials. GAO defined external customers as applicants who had been recently hired by the federal government when GAO began its study. In addition, GAO surveyed managers of OPM service centers who refer lists of job candidates to agencies for certain occupations.

Results in Brief

Reform initiatives designed to make parts of the hiring process more timely and responsive include a personnel demonstration project at USDA to test the feasibility of providing managers more selection flexibility; OPM's automation of various hiring procedures; and NPR's recommended reforms to simplify and streamline the hiring process.

Federal hiring procedures should allow people to apply for federal employment without unnecessary frustration. While most recent hires GAO surveyed said they had little trouble with the application process, they often reported that the wait to receive a job offer exceeded what they considered reasonable. Moreover, follow-up interviews with representatives of four major veterans groups suggested veterans may not be satisfied with preference procedures. The representatives GAO spoke

with said that veterans' preference procedures fell short of veterans' expectations because veterans often did not receive enhanced employment consideration.

Federal hiring procedures should also allow agencies to fill vacancies with qualified people in a timely manner without the burden imposed by bureaucratic processes. Most internal respondents GAO surveyed said that while federal referral procedures met this standard, selection procedures frequently did not.

Processes used to apply veterans' preference and the Rule of Three during the selection phase caused the most dissatisfaction for many OPM and internal respondents. While other legal requirements were said by respondents to affect either timeliness or candidate quality, only veterans' preference and the Rule of Three were often said to adversely affect both.

When asked if federal hiring procedures have impeded agency operations, agency personnelists responding to the GAO survey noted that shortcomings with the federal hiring process can increase the time needed to hire candidates and add to paperwork.

The current OPM and NPR reform initiatives may make parts of the hiring process more timely and responsive. However, they do not address the need for balance between managers' desire for flexibility in selecting candidates they feel are best qualified for specific vacancies and the legal requirement to give veterans preference in hiring.

Principal Findings

Current Efforts Are Underway to Reform the Federal Hiring Process

OPM has various initiatives underway to test increased managerial flexibility in the hiring process and to improve its overall timeliness. These initiatives include a personnel demonstration project at the USDA that is testing alternative recruitment and staffing methods using delegated direct hire authority at selected sites of the Forest Service and Agriculture Research Service.

The most recent evaluation of the USDA demonstration project concluded that, overall, managers, personnelists, and recently hired employees participating in the program were generally pleased with the way it was

working. Further, most demonstration site managers wanted to continue the demonstration hiring procedures. However, one potentially problematic area was the way in which veterans' preference is applied. According to the evaluation, many selecting officials expressed dissatisfaction with the demonstration project's system of veterans' preference because it could restrict their ability to choose nonveterans they thought were better qualified. The selecting officials' dissatisfaction appeared to be entwined with their dissatisfaction over the criteria used to assign candidates to the top group for selection.

In addition, OPM has automated the application, rating, ranking, referral, and employment information processes. OPM believes this has improved the timeliness of the hiring process. Moreover, the NPR recommended reforms to simplify and streamline the hiring process. In response, OPM has taken steps to make the hiring process more customer oriented and to delegate staffing authority to agencies. (See pp. 18-20.)

Most External Customers Were Satisfied With Federal Application Procedures but Were Less Satisfied With Timeliness

Most external customers said the application phase posed few difficulties. Indeed, the majority of respondents reported no or only some difficulty with such activities as obtaining application materials and employment information, or knowing where to submit their applications. Nevertheless, of the recent hires who also applied for a similar job in the private sector, about 59 percent reported that the private sector application process was easier.

The timeliness of the federal hiring process may not be satisfying many external customers. Depending on whether they applied for federal employment based on their education and experience or by taking an examination, recent hires reported a median waiting time of 8 or 14 weeks between the time they applied for employment and the time they received a job offer. About a third of the recent hires responding felt that the wait to receive a job offer became unreasonable after 6 weeks. (See pp. 20-23.)

Procedures Used to Hire Veterans May Not Meet Their Needs

The survey did not ask recent hires about their perceptions of veterans' preference and the Rule of Three. However, follow-up interviews with officials representing four major veterans' groups suggested that implementation of these legal requirements may fall short of the expectations of applicants who are military veterans. On the basis of prior work, GAO concludes that one reason for this shortfall is that agencies prefer using noncompetitive hiring mechanisms where they do not have to

apply veterans' preference points and the Rule of Three. Moreover, agencies were less likely to hire from a certificate of eligible candidates when a veteran was top rated than when a nonveteran headed the certificate. Because of this practice, procedures used to give veterans preference in hiring may not be meeting veterans' expectations. (See pp. 23-32.)

OPM and Agency Officials Said the Referral Phase Was Generally Working Well

OPM service center managers, agency personnelists, and selecting officials were generally satisfied with the quality of candidates referred by most federal hiring mechanisms and with the timeliness of the examination and referral process. For example, 73 percent or more of the personnelists responding said they were satisfied with the ability of 13 of the 14 hiring mechanisms GAO asked them about to refer a pool of quality candidates. Personnelists were generally more satisfied with hiring mechanisms controlled by agencies under delegated authorities as opposed to those controlled by OPM. (See pp. 25-30.)

The Application of Veterans' Preference and the Rule of Three Lowered Some Respondents' Satisfaction During the Selection Phase

OPM and agency officials were less satisfied with the selection phase than with the referral phase, frequently citing veterans' preference and the Rule of Three as the reasons for their discontent. Over 75 percent of the OPM service center managers and 50 percent of the agency personnelists reported that highly qualified candidates were not within reach as a result of adding points to the veterans' scores. OPM service center managers we contacted often expressed their support for the principle of veterans' preference but believed it could be implemented in other, more effective ways. About 40 percent of these managers and personnelists reported that the Rule of Three, which limits selections to the top three candidates, had the same effect. Veterans' preference and the Rule of Three were less problematic for selecting officials. A fifth of the selecting officials reported that veterans' preference procedures adversely affected their ability to obtain high quality candidates, while 10 percent indicated the Rule of Three did the same.

Some respondents also reported that these two legal requirements adversely affected timeliness. Of those responding, 45 percent of the OPM service center managers, 41 percent of the agency personnelists, and 19 percent of the selecting officials reported that the implementation of veterans' preference increased the amount of time needed to fill vacancies.

Similar percentages of respondents said the Rule of Three delayed the hiring process. One reason may be that selecting officials, believing that the best qualified candidates are not within reach, return a certificate to OPM without making a selection from it in order to fill the vacancy through some other means. Thus, the total time needed to fill a vacancy may be extended. (See pp. 30-33.)

Agency Personnelists Said That Shortcomings in Federal Hiring Procedures Adversely Affect Their Offices

When asked whether difficulties with federal hiring procedures were adversely affecting them, agency personnelists cited various impacts. These impacts included (1) more time needed to hire candidates and (2) increased workloads and paperwork. (See pp. 33-35.)

Current Reform Initiatives May Not Fully Meet Respondents' Needs

While OPM automation initiatives and NPR's recommendations may improve timeliness and make the hiring process more responsive, they do not address the primary reasons causing dissatisfaction among respondents GAO surveyed—that is, veterans' preference and the Rule of Three. (See p. 35.)

Recommendation

To reconcile the needs of internal and external customers (including veterans), GAO recommends that the Director of OPM, under the OPM personnel demonstration authority, actively recruit agencies and assist them in establishing demonstration projects that would test improved methods of implementing veterans' preference in hiring. Such alternatives should attempt to better reconcile managers' desire for greater discretion in the selection process with the legal requirement to provide veterans with preference in hiring, and should be developed in consultation with representatives of veterans' organizations, labor unions, and other affected parties. To ensure that increased flexibility does not come at the expense of accountability, any alternative tested should hold managers responsible for enhancing veteran employment opportunities as required by law. On the basis of evaluations of these agency demonstration projects, OPM, in consultation with affected parties, may then be in a position to propose statutory changes to the hiring process that would implement successful innovations governmentwide. (See pp. 36-37.)

Agency Comments

In commenting on a draft of this report, OPM generally agreed with GAO's findings and said that it is prepared to implement GAO's recommendation.

Executive Summary

OPM suggested technical changes, which GAO incorporated where appropriate, to ensure that the report adequately reflected the current status of its various initiatives to improve the hiring process. (See p. 37.)

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Abbreviations

ACWA	Administrative Careers With America
ARS	Agricultural Research Service
CPDF	Central Personnel Data File
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
FS	Forest Service
NPR	National Performance Review
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
VA	Department of Veterans Affairs
VSO	Veterans' Service Organization

Introduction

The efficiency and effectiveness of government programs are directly affected by the quality of the people who run them. However, our prior work and studies by other organizations have shown that shortcomings with the federal hiring process have impeded the ability of agencies to get the people they need, when they were needed (see Related GAO Products, p. 96). Currently, with major efforts underway aimed at reforming the federal hiring process, what will it take to make federal hiring procedures more responsive to the legitimate needs of agencies and applicants? To help answer this question, we asked the key people involved in the hiring process about their requirements in order to obtain their views on procedures that are working, those that are not, and whether current efforts to reform the hiring process address the needs of agencies and applicants.

Origins of the Current Federal Hiring Process

Current federal hiring procedures originated in legislation passed in 1883, when Congress approved the Civil Service Act. Commonly called the Pendleton Act, this law replaced the patronage system—where jobs were filled through personal and political favoritism—with a merit system, where jobs were filled according to applicants’ character, ability, and competitive examination scores.

Over time, laws and regulations were added to increase accountability, correct perceived mismanagement, achieve social goals, and reward certain military veterans. As a result, the current federal hiring process is a patchwork of procedures designed not only to fill vacancies but also to ensure merit and increase the employment of women, minorities, and veterans.

In our earlier work in this area, we found that these procedures often do not meet their objectives, sometimes conflict, and can overwhelm both managers and applicants with their complexity. These problems are illustrated in appendix I, which flowcharts the various twists, turns, and “ping-ponging” that can take place when a federal agency attempts to fill a position using an OPM certificate.

How New Federal Employees Are Hired

Despite governmentwide downsizing efforts, OPM reported that federal executive branch agencies hired about 219,000 new employees in fiscal year 1994. Of these, about 38,000 were hired into permanent full time positions (exclusive of on call, seasonal, and student trainee employees). Depending on the qualifications of the candidate and the type of position

being filled, applicants can be hired by using one of over a dozen different legal authorities. These authorities cover positions in both the competitive and excepted services. Competitive service hiring is administered by OPM or by agencies under delegated hiring authorities from OPM. Entry into these positions generally requires that candidates be competitively assessed on the basis of their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

There are three categories of competitive service mechanisms:

1. OPM examining, where OPM administers a written test or reviews applicants' education and prior experience to determine if applicants are qualified. Qualified applicants are rated and placed in rank order on a register from which hiring officials can request a certificate or list of eligible candidates representing the most qualified applicants, from which they can make selections.
2. Delegated examining, where agencies receive applications, review qualifications, and rate and rank applicants under authority granted by OPM.
3. Direct hire, where OPM gives an agency authority to directly recruit and hire candidates when the agency or installation is experiencing a shortage of qualified applicants.

The excepted service covers positions specifically excepted from the competitive service by statute, the President, or OPM, and which are not in the Senior Executive Service. The excepted service includes entire agencies, such as the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, as well as specific positions where it is impractical to hold examinations or open competition. Such positions include attorneys, chaplains, Presidential Management Internships, and student cooperative education programs.

Federal Hiring Procedures Typically Have Four Phases

Four phases are usually involved in any hiring process: (1) a recruitment phase, where job openings are publicized and candidates are identified and invited to apply; (2) an application phase, where candidates apply for specific positions; (3) a referral phase, where candidates are examined and the names of qualified candidates are referred to agency selecting officials (managers who make hiring decisions); and (4) a selection phase, where the selecting official chooses the desired candidates from among the best qualified.

Federal Hiring Procedures Must Comply With Legal Requirements

Most Federal Hiring Actions Must Comply With Merit Principles

Competitive and excepted service selections for federal service must generally comply with merit principles. Merit principles require, among other things, that “[r]ecruitment should be from qualified individuals from appropriate sources in an endeavor to achieve a workforce from all segments of society, and selection and advancement should be determined solely on the basis of relative ability, knowledge, and skills, after fair and open competition which assures that all receive equal opportunity” (5 U.S.C. 2301 (b) (1) (1988)).

Eligible Veterans Can Receive Preference in Hiring

To help compensate veterans for their military service, the Veterans’ Preference Act of 1944, as amended, requires that eligible veterans be given enhanced consideration for federal jobs. Though modified several times, the current veterans’ preference system covers veterans who meet certain service requirements. In some instances, the spouses, unmarried widows and widowers, and mothers of disabled or deceased veterans can also receive preference. With veterans’ preference, either 5 or 10 points are added to the passing examination scores of eligible veterans. In addition, eligible veterans with service-connected disabilities are placed ahead of all other candidates on certificates.

Selections Must Be Made From Among the Top Three Eligible Candidates

While a certificate of rated and ranked applicants may contain many names, by law, managers are required to select from among the top three candidates as determined by the results of a written test or a review of candidates’ education and experience. This is known as the Rule of Three, a component of veterans’ preference legislation. If qualified candidates are available among the top three on a certificate, the manager cannot select a candidate ranked lower on the certificate without filing a formal objection. Moreover, unless a request is approved to pass over a veteran for reasons involving qualifications or suitability, a manager may not select a nonveteran over a higher ranking veteran. In these cases, the Rule of Three becomes, in effect, a Rule of One.

Federal Hiring Actions Must Comply With Equal Employment Opportunity Laws

The doctrine of equal employment opportunity (EEO) is embodied in several federal laws. EEO generally requires that all citizens, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or disability, shall have equal access to positions in the public service and to all conditions of employment attendant thereto—limited only by their ability or potential to do the job.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

Concerned about the government's ability to hire quality candidates in a timely, efficient manner, the former Chairman of the Subcommittee on Civil Service, House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, asked us to review federal hiring procedures and determine those which are working, those which are not, and whether current efforts to reform the hiring process address the needs of agencies and applicants.

To accomplish these three objectives, we examined OPM's reform efforts and the National Performance Review (NPR) findings and recommendations as they relate to federal hiring. We also mailed questionnaires to approximately 2,200 randomly selected internal and external customers of the federal hiring process. The internal customers consisted of agency personnelists and selecting officials. External customers included applicants who had been recently hired by the federal government when we began our study. We were unable to survey all applicants because the names and addresses were unavailable for most applicants who had declined federal job offers or who had failed to qualify. Because recent hires have been successful in obtaining federal employment, their views may not be representative of applicants as a whole.

In addition, we surveyed the managers of the 31 OPM service centers that were operating when we did our review. OPM service centers examine candidates for certain occupations and refer lists of qualified people to agencies.

Specific questionnaires were developed for each respondent group. Where appropriate, each group was asked identical questions. However, internal customers were generally asked about referral and selection procedures, while external customers were generally asked about application procedures. Selecting officials were mailed an additional questionnaire eliciting information on whether they were satisfied with the processes used to select specific candidates whom we had identified. Copies of the

questionnaires and the aggregate results from respondents are contained in appendixes II through VI.

Response rates for each respondent category as a percentage of deliverable questionnaires were as follows:

- OPM service center managers, 100 percent;
- agency personnelists, 87 percent;
- selecting officials' perceptions of specific hiring actions, 64 percent;
- selecting officials' perceptions of the overall hiring process, 73 percent;
- and
- recent hires, 77 percent.

The details of our survey methodology and response rates are provided in appendix VII.

After analyzing questionnaire responses from OPM and agency personnel, it became apparent that they were primarily dissatisfied with the way in which veterans' preference and the Rule of Three adversely affected their ability to hire quality candidates in a timely manner. As a result, to obtain the views of those external customers who might be affected by any changes to these two legal requirements, we contacted representatives of four major veterans' service organizations (VSO) that together represent about 6.5 million members: (1) the American Legion, (2) Veterans of Foreign Wars, (3) Disabled American Veterans, and (4) Vietnam Veterans of America. We also compared the respondents' views with the results of earlier studies done by us and other organizations. In so doing, we verified our questionnaire results, reconciled competing customer requirements, and refined respondents' suggestions into recommendations that we believe are reasonable, achievable, and consistent with congressional intent. Further verification and refinement of respondents' suggestions for improving the hiring process were obtained by discussing our results with officials from OPM and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

We also examined OPM's reform efforts and the NPR findings and recommendations to determine whether they address respondents' requirements as identified by the results of our work.

The scope of our work covered all federal hiring procedures, mechanisms, and legal requirements used to hire civilian white and blue collar employees into the federal government during fiscal year 1992. Excluded from our review were those selections made through internal merit

promotion, positions filled overseas, political appointments, and positions in the Senior Executive Service. Also excluded were those agencies (such as the U.S. Postal Service) not part of OPM's Central Personnel Data File, the database used as the sampling frame for our surveys.

We did our audit work in Washington, D.C., from June 1992 through December 1994 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. OPM provided oral comments on a draft of this report. They are presented at the end of chapter 2.

Perceptions of Federal Hiring Procedures

OPM and NPR have initiated improvements to the hiring process in order to make it more customer oriented. Federal hiring procedures should allow people to apply for federal employment without unnecessary frustration. Likewise, they should permit agencies to fill vacancies with qualified people in a timely manner without the burden of complex and bureaucratic processes. Survey respondents generally said that while many aspects of the hiring process met these standards, veterans' preference, the Rule of Three, and the timeliness of the hiring process overall, often fell short of their needs. The reforms underway by OPM and NPR may improve timeliness and reduce complexity, but they do not address the balance needed between managers' desire for flexibility in selecting candidates they feel are best qualified and the legal requirement to give veterans preference in hiring.

OPM and NPR Have Taken Steps to Reform Federal Hiring

OPM has various initiatives underway to test increased managerial flexibility in the hiring process and to improve its overall timeliness. They include a personnel demonstration project at USDA and OPM's automation of various hiring procedures. Similarly, NPR has recommended reforms to simplify and streamline the hiring process. In response to NPR's recommendations, OPM has taken steps to make the hiring process more customer oriented and to delegate staffing authority to agencies.

OPM Is Testing Increased Managerial Flexibility in the Hiring Process

Under 5 U.S.C. 4703, OPM has the authority to conduct and evaluate demonstration projects to determine whether a specified change in personnel management policies or procedures would result in improved federal personnel management. To be considered a "demonstration project," a project must require the waiver of an eligible provision of law, rule, or regulation. According to OPM, all laws and regulations under title 5 may be waived except those dealing with leave, benefits, political activity, merit principles, and equal employment opportunity. Each demonstration project is generally limited to a 5-year test period. Not more than 10 active demonstration projects may be in effect at any time, and each demonstration project is generally limited to 5,000 participants. According to OPM, since demonstration projects were first authorized in 1978, six have been implemented, and three are still in effect.

One demonstration project designed to test alternative recruitment and staffing methods is currently underway at USDA. Among the tests being done at selected sites of the Forest Service (FS) and Agricultural Research

Service (ARS) are delegated direct hiring and a new system for selecting candidates for all competitive appointments.

In the USDA demonstration project, qualified candidates are evaluated and placed in either an “eligible” group or a “quality” group. Generally, job candidates meeting minimum qualification standards for the position are placed in the eligible group. Those candidates exceeding minimum qualifications by virtue of above average educational achievement, job-related experience, and/or high ability are placed in the quality group. Managers may select anyone in the quality group. However, if the quality group includes veterans, a veteran must be selected unless he or she is “passed over” for cause. This approach, known as “absolute preference,” differs from the traditional method of veterans’ preference, where veterans are given either 5 or 10 additional points. If the quality group is not sufficiently large (e.g., if it consists of only three candidates), the selecting official can select from the eligible group.

A recent evaluation of the USDA demonstration project by Pennsylvania State University concluded that “there is a positive reaction overall to the demonstration project by ARS and FS managers as well as personnelists and recently hired employees.” Moreover, 64 percent of demonstration site managers agreed or strongly agreed that they would “much rather continue” the demonstration hiring procedures, compared with 9 percent who disagreed or strongly disagreed that they would much rather continue the demonstration hiring authority.

Nevertheless, the evaluation noted that many selecting officials were dissatisfied with the demonstration project’s system of absolute veterans’ preference. According to the evaluation, the dissatisfaction appeared to be entwined with selecting officials’ dissatisfaction with the criteria used to assign candidates to the quality grouping. These officials reported that they believed using too low or vague criteria allowed some unqualified candidates to get assigned to the quality group. If a veteran was one of those candidates, the officials said that person could block the selection of nonveterans who managers felt were qualified. Nevertheless, the evaluation noted that when the criteria for inclusion in the quality group were not perceived to be problematic, managers described instances in which veterans were selected who were high-quality employees.

OPM Has Automated the
Federal Hiring Process

OPM has automated the application, rating, ranking, referral, and employment information processes. For example, OPM has developed a

system that allows people to apply for certain federal positions using a touch-tone telephone. Other automated systems allow applicants to obtain governmentwide employment information using touch-screen computers, the telephone, and computer bulletin board. OPM believes that these automated systems have improved the timeliness of the hiring process.

NPR Called for Decentralized Hiring Procedures

OPM is also reforming the hiring process in response to the NPR recommendations. In its September 1993 report, NPR described the federal hiring process as complex, centralized, and rule bound. It recommended decentralizing the hiring process by authorizing agencies to establish their own recruitment and examining programs and by abolishing centralized registers and standard application forms. To date, OPM has made progress toward achieving the NPR recommendations. In January 1994, for example, OPM abolished much of the Federal Personnel Manual to give agencies more flexibility over personnel matters, including hiring. The government's standard application form, the SF-171, was no longer required after December 31, 1994, and OPM will delegate staffing authority to agencies to the extent allowed by law.

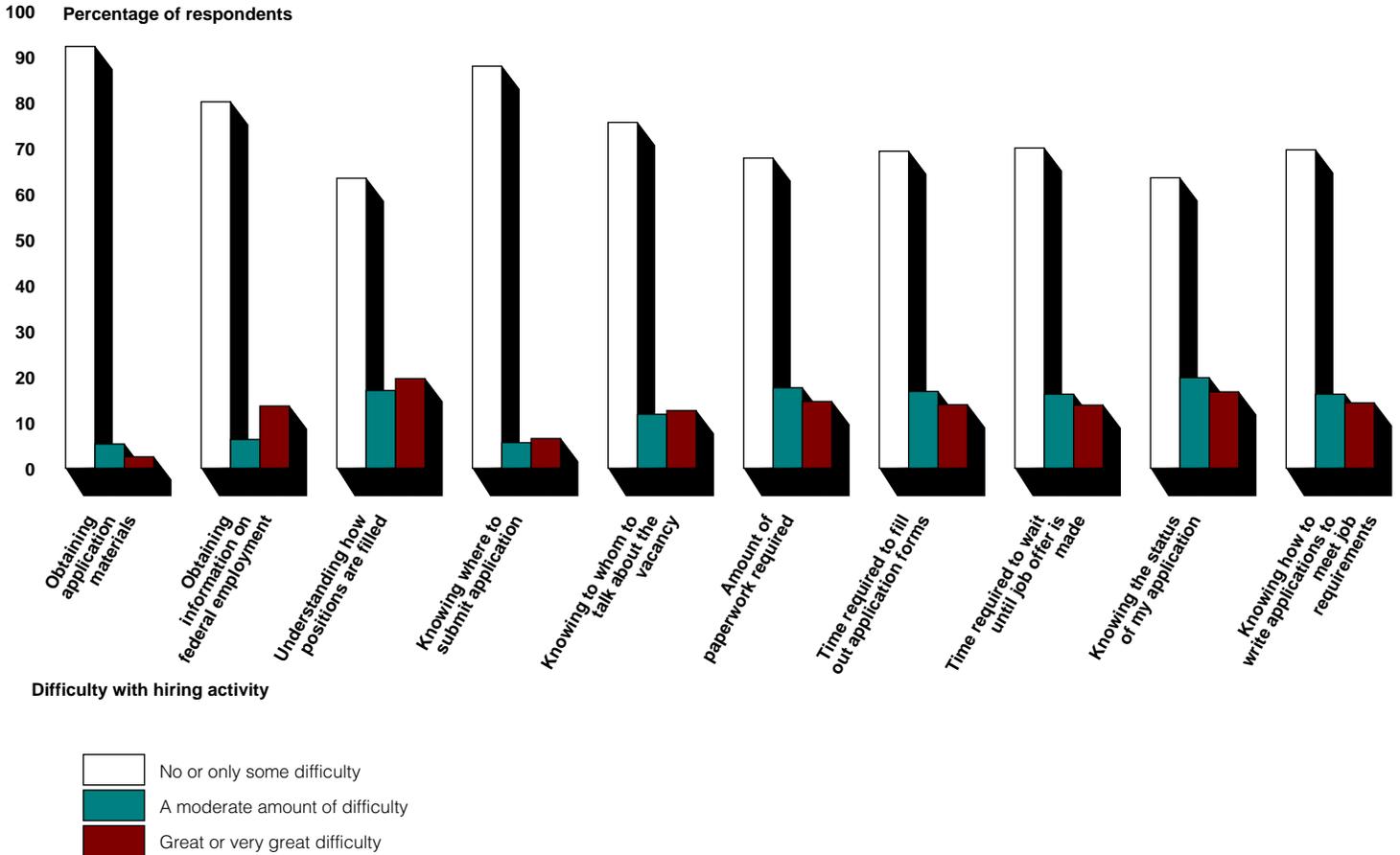
External Customers' Perceptions of Federal Application Procedures

While most recent hires we surveyed said they had little trouble with the application process, they often reported that the wait to receive a job offer exceeded what they considered reasonable. Moreover, follow-up interviews with representatives of vsos suggested that applicants who are military veterans may not be satisfied with veterans' preference procedures. According to the officials we contacted, veterans who received additional points were not being hired as often as they should be.

Most External Customers Said Application Procedures Were Generally Working Well but Were Less Satisfied With Overall Timeliness

Most external customers we surveyed said the application phase posed few difficulties. As shown in figure 2.1, the majority of respondents reported no or only some difficulty with such activities as obtaining application material and employment information or knowing where to submit their applications.

Figure 2.1: Recent Hires' Perceptions of Federal Application Procedures



Note: Percentages were based on those respondents who indicated their perceptions of federal application procedures.

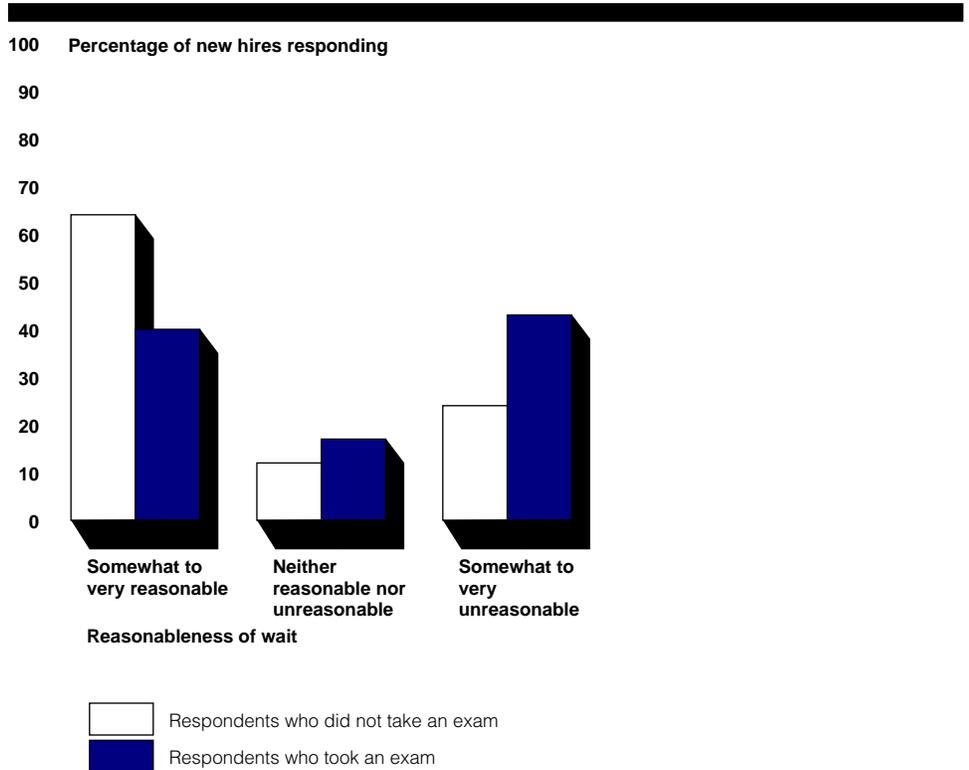
Source: GAO survey (see app. VI, question 14).

This is not to suggest that all is well from the external customers' perspective, however. For example, we asked recent hires how reasonable or unreasonable the wait was between the time they applied for federal employment and the time they received a job offer. While many respondents said the wait was somewhat to very reasonable, depending on

how they applied, 24 percent or more of the respondents said the wait was somewhat to very unreasonable.

As shown in figure 2.2, of those applicants who qualified for a federal job on the basis of their education and experience, 66 percent reported that the wait was somewhat to very reasonable, while 24 percent reported that it was somewhat to very unreasonable. Respondents who took a written examination were less happy with the amount of time it took to receive a job offer. Forty percent said the wait was somewhat to very reasonable, while 43 percent said it was somewhat to very unreasonable.

Figure 2.2: Recent Hires' Perceptions of the Reasonableness of the Amount of Time Between Applying for a Federal Job and Receiving a Job Offer



Note: Percentages are based on those respondents who indicated the reasonableness of the amount of time between applying for a federal job and receiving a job offer.

Source: GAO survey (see app. VI, questions 7-8; 10-11).

Many agencies may not be able to meet applicants' expectations for timeliness. Although almost a third of the recent hires responding said the wait to receive a job offer becomes somewhat to very unreasonable after 6 weeks, those who qualified for federal employment through their education and experience reported a median waiting time of 8 weeks. Those who took an exam reported a median waiting time of 14 weeks. Both periods exceeded what they considered a reasonable period to wait.

The following selection of comments written by the recent hires reflects their frustration over delays in the hiring system:

- "Sometimes things take forever, or you never hear one way or another about potential positions."
- "Fourteen weeks from application to hire is a little extreme."

Aside from timeliness, external customer responses suggested federal application procedures might be needlessly complex. Of the 36 percent of recent hires who said they had applied for comparable jobs in the private sector, 59 percent reported that applying for the private sector position was easier. Applying for a federal job may also be difficult without assistance. About 38 percent of the recent hires said they needed help from a family member, friend, or agency official in applying for their current position.

The federal hiring process may also be perceived as so complex that some prospective candidates may not be applying in the first place. Our recent survey of nearly 1,000 new graduates from 4 universities found that their most frequent reasons for not considering federal employment were a lack of information on federal jobs, the inability to identify specific job openings, and the federal job application process.¹

Veterans May Not Be Satisfied With Veterans' Preference Procedures

Although we did not ask external hires about their perceptions of veterans' preference and the Rule of Three, follow-up interviews with representatives of four vsos suggested that applicants who are military veterans may not be satisfied with veterans' preference procedures. The representatives believed that veterans' preference currently does not have the same strength as it did when first enacted in 1944 and that veterans are not being hired as often as they should be.

¹Federal Employment: How Government Jobs Are Viewed on Some College Campuses (GAO/GGD-94-181, Sep. 9, 1994), p. 12.

On the basis of our earlier work, it appears one reason why veterans believe they are not being hired as frequently as they should is that agencies prefer using hiring processes that do not require the application of veterans' preference points and the Rule of Three. In our 1994 review of the Administrative Careers With America (ACWA) program, for example, we found that one reason for ACWA's low usage was that agencies favored other mechanisms, such as the Outstanding Scholar Program, that do not require rating and ranking and thus do not involve the application of veterans' preference points and the Rule of Three.²

Even when preference points are added, selecting officials are less likely to hire from a certificate with a veteran in the top position. Our March 1992 report on veterans' preference showed that selecting officials returned certificates unused more frequently when a veteran was at the top of the certificate than when a nonveteran headed the certificate. Of the certificates headed by veterans, 71 percent were returned unused, compared with 51 percent of the certificates headed by nonveterans.³

During our review, we learned of the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) efforts to enhance its employment of veterans in addition to using preference points. VA officials told us about their Veteran Employment Program, established to encourage all VA organizations to increase their efforts to recruit and hire veterans. As part of this effort, VA monitors its veteran employment through quarterly listings of overall veteran employment, categorized by each VA facility. Facilities are ranked based on their overall and disabled veteran employment figures. Individual facilities can then be compared with the national federal veteran employment averages. An extensive outreach and recruitment effort has also been incorporated as part of this employment program. According to OPM data, as of September 1993, 72,348 veterans (12 percent of all veterans in the federal executive nonpostal workforce) were working for VA. The Army, Navy, and Air Force were the only agencies that employed more veterans.

²Federal Hiring: Testing for Entry-Level Administrative Positions Falls Short of Expectations (GAO/GGD-94-103, Mar. 30, 1994), p. 10.

³Federal Hiring: Does Veterans' Preference Need Updating? (GAO/GGD-92-52, Mar. 20, 1992), p. 27.

OPM and Agency Officials Said They Were Generally Satisfied With the Referral Process

OPM and agency officials were generally satisfied with the quality of candidates referred and the timeliness of the referral phase. However, those mechanisms administered by OPM were less satisfactory to agency personnelists.

Most OPM and Agency Officials Said They Were Satisfied With the Quality of Candidates Referred

When we asked OPM service center managers about the three hiring mechanisms administered by OPM (ACWA, OPM certification process with an existing inventory of applicants, and OPM certification process without an existing inventory of applicants), most said they were satisfied with the ability of two of the three mechanisms to refer a quality pool of job candidates to selecting officials. Of the 30 managers who said they used them, 27 said they were satisfied or very satisfied with OPM's certification process with an existing inventory of applicants and 28 felt the same about the OPM certification process without an existing inventory of applicants.⁴

OPM service center managers were less satisfied with the ACWA examination. Of the 11 service center managers who expressed an opinion on ACWA, 6 said they were satisfied or very satisfied with ACWA's ability to produce a quality pool of job candidates, 3 said they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, and 2 indicated they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Since November 1994, OPM no longer requires applicants to take the ACWA exam. Currently, job seekers can apply for specific vacancies by completing a questionnaire and submitting a resume. Agencies then have the option of requiring an applicant to take a written test.

As shown in table 2.1, when we asked agency personnelists how satisfied they were with the ability of 14 hiring mechanisms to produce quality candidates, 73 percent or more of the respondents said they were generally to very satisfied with 13 of the mechanisms. However, like the OPM service center managers, they were less satisfied with ACWA.

⁴For some occupations, OPM maintains an existing inventory of applications. These inventories are usually standing registers of applications for high turnover occupations where a continuing hiring need exists, as opposed to a one-time need where applications are requested for a limited period of time.

Table 2.1: Percentage of Agency Personnelists Satisfied or Dissatisfied With the Ability of Federal Hiring Mechanisms to Produce Quality Job Candidates

Hiring mechanism	Generally to very satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Generally to very dissatisfied
ACWA (N = 304)	51%	21%	28%
OPM certification process (excluding ACWA) with an existing inventory of applicants (N = 916)	73	13	15
OPM certification process (excluding ACWA) without an existing inventory of applicants (N = 951)	77	12	12
Delegated examining process with an existing inventory of applicants (N = 578)	87	9	4
Delegated examining process without an existing inventory of applicants (N = 737)	92	4	4
Delegated direct hire (nonclerical) (N = 697)	89	9	2
Delegated direct hire (clerical) (N = 713)	88	6	5
Outstanding scholar (N = 556)	93	5	2
Cooperative education (N = 757)	96	4	0
Veterans Readjustment (N = 928)	89	11	0
Presidential Management Intern (N = 161)	91	9	0
Student program (N = 681)	95	4	1
Internal merit promotion (N = 1,186)	93	5	2
Handicapped/disabled (N = 829)	90	10	0

Legend: N equals the projected number of personnelists the responses represent.

Note 1: Row totals may add to more than 100 percent because of rounding.

Note 2: Percentages are based on the number of respondents who indicated they used a particular process or authority in fiscal year 1992.

Source: GAO survey (see app. III, question 8).

Generally, respondents reported being less satisfied with the three mechanisms over which agencies have little direct control, such as the OPM certification processes, including ACWA.

When we asked selecting officials how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the quality of candidates referred to them for specific positions that we randomly identified, 74 percent of those responding said they were

generally to very satisfied, 11 percent said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, while the remainder were generally to very dissatisfied, unsure, or unable to judge.

Most OPM and Agency Officials Said They Were Satisfied With the Timeliness of the Referral Phase

Our data indicated that referral procedures generally met OPM and agency officials' expectations for timeliness. For example, of the 30 OPM service center managers who said they had used the OPM certification process with an existing inventory of applicants, all reported they were satisfied or very satisfied with its ability to produce a list of candidates for agency personnel offices in a timely manner. Of the 13 respondents who expressed an opinion on ACWA, 12 said they were satisfied or very satisfied, and 1 was neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. OPM service center managers were the most dissatisfied with the timeliness of an OPM certificate without an inventory of candidates. Of the 30 respondents who said they used this mechanism, 22 were satisfied or very satisfied, 7 were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, and 1 was neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. (When there is no inventory of candidates, additional time is needed to advertise positions and develop registers of candidates.)

As shown in table 2.2, 83 percent or more of the agency personnelists responding indicated they were generally to very satisfied with the ability of 10 of the 14 hiring mechanisms to deliver a list of qualified applicants to a selecting official in a timely manner. In fact, the maximum level of dissatisfaction did not exceed 20 percent for any of the 14 hiring mechanisms we asked agency personnelists about.

As was the case with the quality of candidates, agency personnelists expressed greater satisfaction with those mechanisms that give their agencies more control and flexibility over hiring, such as delegated examining and direct hire. Conversely, they were less satisfied with those processes using OPM certificates, particularly ACWA.

Chapter 2
Perceptions of Federal Hiring Procedures

Table 2.2: Agency Personnelists' Satisfaction With the Ability of Federal Hiring Mechanisms to Deliver a List of Qualified Applicants to a Selecting Official in a Timely Manner

Hiring mechanism	Generally to very satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Generally to very dissatisfied
ACWA (N = 271)	69%	14%	17%
OPM certification process (excluding ACWA) with an existing inventory of applicants (N = 1,001)	75	13	12
OPM certification process (excluding ACWA) without an existing inventory of applicants (N = 970)	67	13	20
Delegated examining process with an existing inventory of applicants (N = 650)	84	12	5
Delegated examining process without an existing inventory of applicants (N = 796)	87	6	8
Delegated direct hire (nonclerical) (N = 767)	83	9	8
Delegated direct hire (clerical) (N = 827)	86	7	7
Outstanding scholar (N = 612)	95	3	2
Cooperative education (N = 856)	94	5	2
Veterans Readjustment (N = 1,017)	94	4	2
Presidential Management Intern (N = 179)	72	28	0
Student program (N = 778)	91	7	1
Internal merit promotion (N = 1,345)	93	3	4
Handicapped/disabled (N = 989)	93	6	1

Legend: N equals the projected number of personnelists the responses represent.

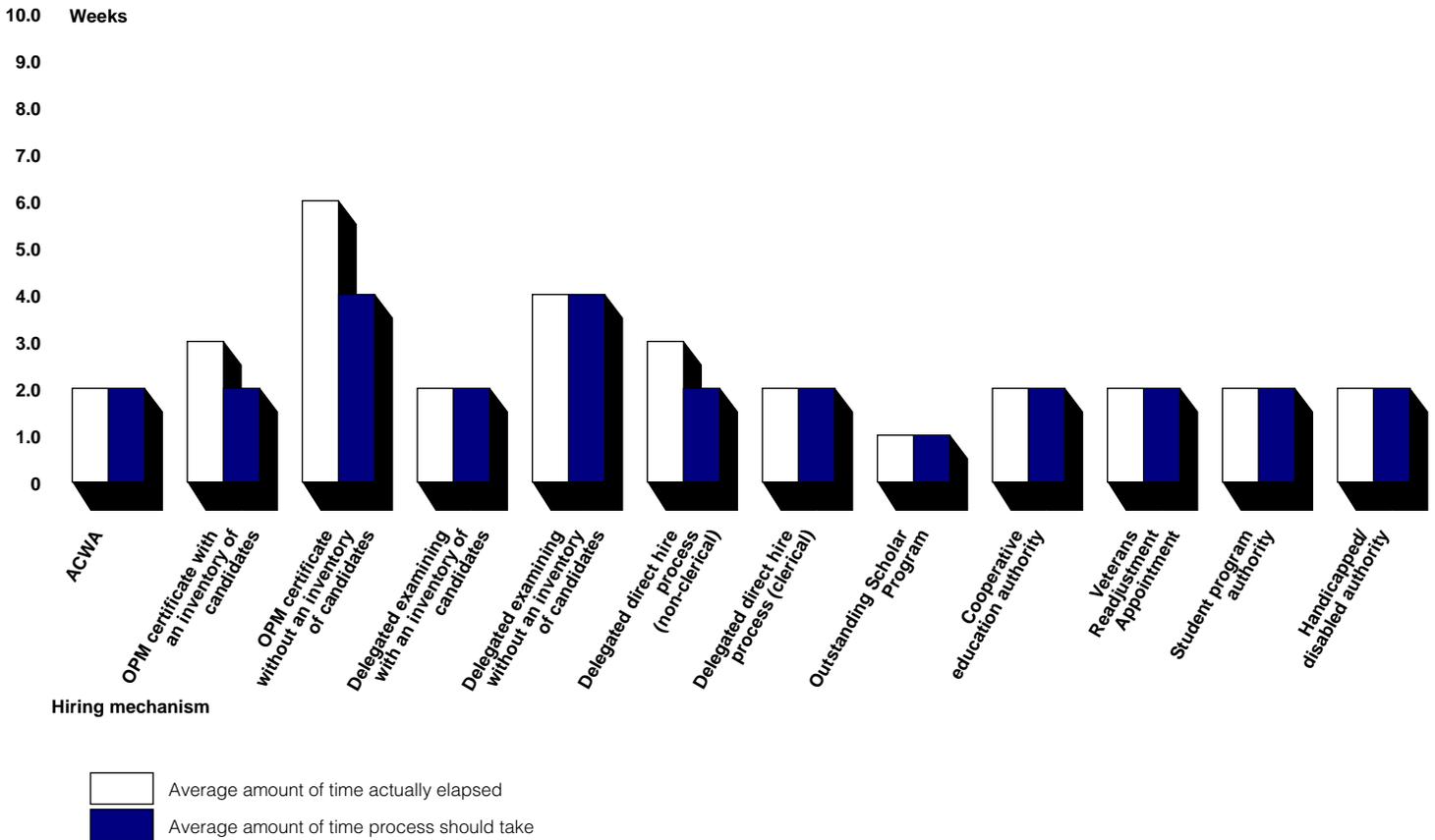
Note 1: Totals may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

Note 2: Percentages are based on the number of respondents who indicated they used a particular process or authority in fiscal year 1992.

Source: GAO survey, (app. III, question 1).

When asked how long various hiring mechanisms were taking compared with how long they should take, agency personnelists indicated that, on average, most mechanisms met their expectations (see fig. 2.3). The largest gap existed for OPM certificates where positions had to be advertised and registers of qualified candidates developed. Agency personnelists said this process should take an average of 4 weeks but believed it was taking 6 weeks or 50 percent longer.

Figure 2.3: Agency Personnelists' Perceptions of How Long Hiring Mechanisms Actually Take Compared to How Long They Feel They Should Take



Note: Percentages are based on those respondents who indicated they had used a particular hiring mechanism.

Source: GAO survey (app. III, question 7).

Selecting officials were generally satisfied with the timeliness of the referral process, although somewhat less so than the agency personnelists. When asked about the timeliness of the referral process for specific hiring actions that we randomly identified, 68 percent said they were generally to very satisfied, 9 percent said they were generally to very dissatisfied, while

the remaining 23 percent were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, unsure, or unable to judge.

OPM and Agency Officials Expressed Less Satisfaction With Legal Requirements Applied During the Selection Phase

The surveys we mailed to OPM service center managers, agency personnelists, and agency selecting officials contained a series of questions that asked what effect, if any, various legal requirements had on their ability to obtain a quality pool of job candidates and the amount of time needed to fill vacancies. The legal requirements included veterans' preference, processes used to ensure merit principles, the Rule of Three, processes used to ensure EEO/Affirmative Action, and union contracts or agreements. While all the legal requirements were said by at least some of the respondents to affect either candidate quality or timeliness, only veterans' preference and the Rule of Three were often said to adversely affect both.

Some OPM and Agency Officials Believed Veterans' Preference and the Rule of Three Can Lower Candidate Quality and Add Delays

As shown in table 2.3, veterans' preference was the legal requirement cited most frequently by OPM and agency officials as decreasing their ability to obtain a quality pool of job candidates. About three-quarters of the OPM service center managers, about half of the agency personnelists, and a fifth of the selecting officials responding indicated that veterans' preference decreased their ability to obtain a quality pool of job candidates. OPM Service Center Managers we contacted often expressed their support for the principle of Veterans' Preference but believed it could be implemented in other, more effective ways. About 40 percent of the OPM service center managers and agency personnelists also said the Rule of Three decreased the ability of agencies to obtain a quality pool of job candidates.

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Table 2.3: Percentage of Respondents Who Believed Various Legal Requirements Affected Their Ability to Obtain a Quality Pool of External Job Candidates

Legal requirement	Respondent group	Not sure/no basis to judge	Decreased quality	No effect on quality	Increased quality
Veterans' preference	OPM service center managers (N = 31)	7%	77%	16%	0%
	Agency personnelists (N = 1,431)	16	52	30	3
	Selecting officials (N = 11,534)	21	20	56	3
The Rule of Three	OPM service center managers (N = 31)	7	42	48	3
	Agency personnelists (N = 1,431)	16	40	41	3
	Selecting officials (N = 11,353)	31	10	54	5
Processes used to ensure merit principles	OPM service center managers (N = 31)	7	7	58	29
	Agency personnelists (N = 1,429)	12	5	75	9
	Selecting officials (N = 11,490)	23	6	58	13
Processes used to ensure EEO/ Affirmative Action	OPM service center managers (N = 31)	26	7	45	23
	Agency personnelists (N = 1,425)	15	13	70	3
	Selecting officials (N = 11,502)	21	11	66	3
Union contracts or agreements	OPM service center managers (N = 30)	60	7	33	0
	Agency personnelists (N = 1,420)	25	8	66	1
	Selecting officials (N = 11,309)	32	2	67	0

Legend: N equals the projected number of respondents the responses represent with the exception of the OPM service center managers, where N represents the universe.

Note: Totals may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

Source: GAO survey (see apps. II, question 15; III, question 12; V, question 3).

Although 54 percent of the selecting officials did not believe the Rule of Three affected candidate quality, it sometimes played a role in their

decision to return a list of candidates without a selection. Of the 25 percent of the selecting officials who said they had returned at least one list of eligible candidates to their agency personnel office without making a selection from that list in fiscal year 1992, one quarter said they did so because the desired candidate was not within reach due to a higher scoring preference-eligible veteran.

Respondents made a number of comments on veterans' preference, the Rule of Three, and their effect on candidate quality. The following are some of them:

- "As long as Veterans' Preference and Rule of Three have priority over the judgment of agency management, quality will take a backseat." (OPM service center manager)
- "Veterans' preference and the Rule of Three adversely impact on our ability to get to highly qualified candidates." (Personnelist)
- "Veterans Preference and Rule of Three in many cases forces us to take less qualified applicants for positions." (Selecting official)

As shown in table 2.4, some respondents reported that veterans' preference sometimes increased the amount of time needed to fill vacancies. Forty-five percent of OPM service center managers and 41 percent of the agency personnelists believed that veterans' preference increased the amount of time needed to fill vacancies. Selecting officials were less likely to feel this way, with 19 percent reporting that veterans' preference increased the time needed to fill vacancies.

Chapter 2
Perceptions of Federal Hiring Procedures

Table 2.4: Percentage of Respondents Who Believed Various Legal Requirements Affected the Time Needed to Fill Vacancies With External Candidates

Legal requirement	Respondent group	Not sure/no basis to judge	Decreased time needed	No effect on time needed	Increased time needed
Veterans' preference	OPM service center managers (N = 31)	0%	0%	55%	45%
	Agency personnelists (N = 1,431)	14	6	39	41
	Selecting officials (N = 11,497)	25	4	52	19
The Rule of Three	OPM service center managers (N = 31)	0	0	48	52
	Agency personnelists (N = 1,431)	13	1	49	37
	Selecting officials (N = 11,337)	37	1	46	16
Processes used to ensure merit principles	OPM service center managers (N = 31)	0	0	29	71
	Agency personnelists (N = 1,429)	9	0	53	38
	Selecting officials (N = 11,440)	26	0	46	28
Processes used to ensure EEO/ Affirmative Action	OPM service center managers (N = 31)	23	0	39	39
	Agency personnelists (N = 1,414)	11	0	54	34
	Selecting officials (N = 11,495)	23	1	58	18
Union contracts or agreements	OPM service center managers (N = 31)	45	0	39	16
	Agency personnelists (N = 1,420)	23	2	45	30
	Selecting officials (N = 11,432)	33	0	62	5

Legend: N is the projected number of respondents the responses represent, with the exception of the OPM service center managers, where N represents the universe.

Note: Totals may add to more than 100 percent because of rounding.

Source: GAO survey (see apps. II, question 14; III, question 11; IV, question 2).

Selecting officials were less likely to hold this view, with 19 percent believing that veterans' preference increased the amount of time needed to fill a vacancy.

Regarding the Rule of Three, 52 percent of the OPM service center managers, 37 percent of the agency personnelists, and 16 percent of the selecting officials believed that it increased the amount of time needed to fill vacancies. One reason for this belief may be that selecting officials, believing that the best qualified candidates are not within reach, return a certificate to OPM without making a selection from it in order to fill the vacancy through some other means. As a result, the total time needed to fill a vacancy may be extended.

Table 2.4 also shows that many respondents also believed that processes used to ensure merit principles increased the time needed to fill vacancies. This increased time may be caused by the need to recruit candidates and announce positions using various methods so that the merit principle of fair and open competition may be met. Likewise, the need for additional recruiting efforts may be the reason respondents believe that processes used to ensure equal employment opportunity increased the time needed to fill vacancies.

Personnelists Said Problems With the Hiring Process Adversely Affect Their Offices

By reviewing written comments that agency personnelists added to their surveys, we sought to determine what happens when federal hiring procedures fall short of expectations and whether agency operations, agency employees, job applicants, and taxpayers are affected in any way.

In the survey sent to agency personnelists, we asked them to describe what adverse effects, if any, the various hiring processes or authorities used in hiring external job candidates have had on their offices. We asked that they consider such things as excessive use of staff time, paperwork, delayed personnel projects, etc. Of the 192 questionnaires returned, 89 contained a total of 163 comments, which were then coded into five categories for analysis. Comments that did not fit into a specific category were coded as "other." While personnelists' comments help illuminate some of the effects of current federal hiring practices, they can only be taken as representative of the views of those who elected to make comments and cannot be generalized as the views of respondents as a whole.

Some Agency Personnelists Said Federal Hiring Procedures Cause Administrative Burdens

As shown in table 2.5, the two impacts cited most frequently by agency personnelists were (1) the increased time needed to hire a candidate and (2) the added workload of the personnel office, such as additional paperwork. The following are examples of their comments:

- “The federal hiring system needs to be streamlined. Too many delays, too much staff time expended. [We are] buried in paperwork and red tape.”
- “Too much confusion and wasted time. . . .This is a maximum security penitentiary and we have to keep it staffed. There is not the luxury some agencies enjoy; it does not affect their mission all that much if it takes months to fill a position.”
- “Too many resources devoted to managing the paper process. We’re doing work that is non-value added to the organization as a whole. We should be spending those resources on the real work in the selection process: targeted recruitment and assisting selection officials in their part of the process. . . .We are spending resources maintaining an irrelevant paper process and trying to explain an arcane system with little success. . . .”
- “Excessive paperwork to prove we are being fair to everyone, and excessive time needed to process objections on poor candidates.”
- “Twenty-five years ago I started as a Staffing Specialist and essentially the process and/or authorities have not changed. They were wasteful in terms of staff time and paperwork then and they continue to be. . . .”

Table 2.5: Summary of Agency Personnelists’ Comments on How Using Various External Hiring Mechanisms Adversely Affects Their Personnel Offices

Adverse impact	Number of comments	Percent of all comments
Increased time needed to hire candidates	62	38%
Increased workload and paperwork	45	28
Diminished ability to get the best qualified candidates	16	10
Adverse effect on personnel office	28	17
Adverse effect on agency mission	5	3
Other impacts	7	4
Total	163	100%

Source: GAO survey.

Conclusions

OPM’s efforts to reform the hiring process, along with the NPR recommendation for greater decentralization of recruitment and

examination procedures, may improve timeliness and reduce complexity. As a result, customer satisfaction with the hiring process may be improved. Nevertheless, these reform efforts do not address the changes needed to the way veterans' preference and the Rule of Three are implemented. While other legal requirements were said by some respondents to affect either their ability to obtain a pool of quality candidates or the timeliness of the hiring process overall, only veterans' preference and the Rule of Three were often said to affect both.

Some external customers, too, may be poorly served by these two legal requirements, according to VSO representatives we interviewed and our prior work. Under present procedures, agencies often return certificates headed by veterans without making selections, or use alternative mechanisms that do not require the application of veterans' preference points and the Rule of Three.

Recommendation

We recommend that the Director of OPM, under OPM's personnel demonstration project authority (5 U.S.C. 4703), actively recruit agencies and assist them in carrying out demonstration projects that would test improved methods of implementing veterans' preference procedures. Such procedures should attempt to better reconcile managers' desire for greater discretion in the selection process with the legal requirement to provide veterans with preference in hiring.

These procedures should be developed in consultation with representatives of veterans' groups, labor unions, and other affected parties, and could include, for example, such actions as developing alternatives to the Rule of Three, adding a new noncompetitive hiring authority for veterans (in lieu of the current point system), and establishing an affirmative veteran employment program similar to that maintained by VA. To ensure that increased flexibility does not come at the expense of accountability, any alternative tested should hold managers responsible for enhancing veteran employment opportunities, as required by law. On the basis of evaluations of these agency demonstration projects, OPM, in consultation with affected parties, may then be in a position to propose statutory changes to the hiring process that would implement successful innovations governmentwide.

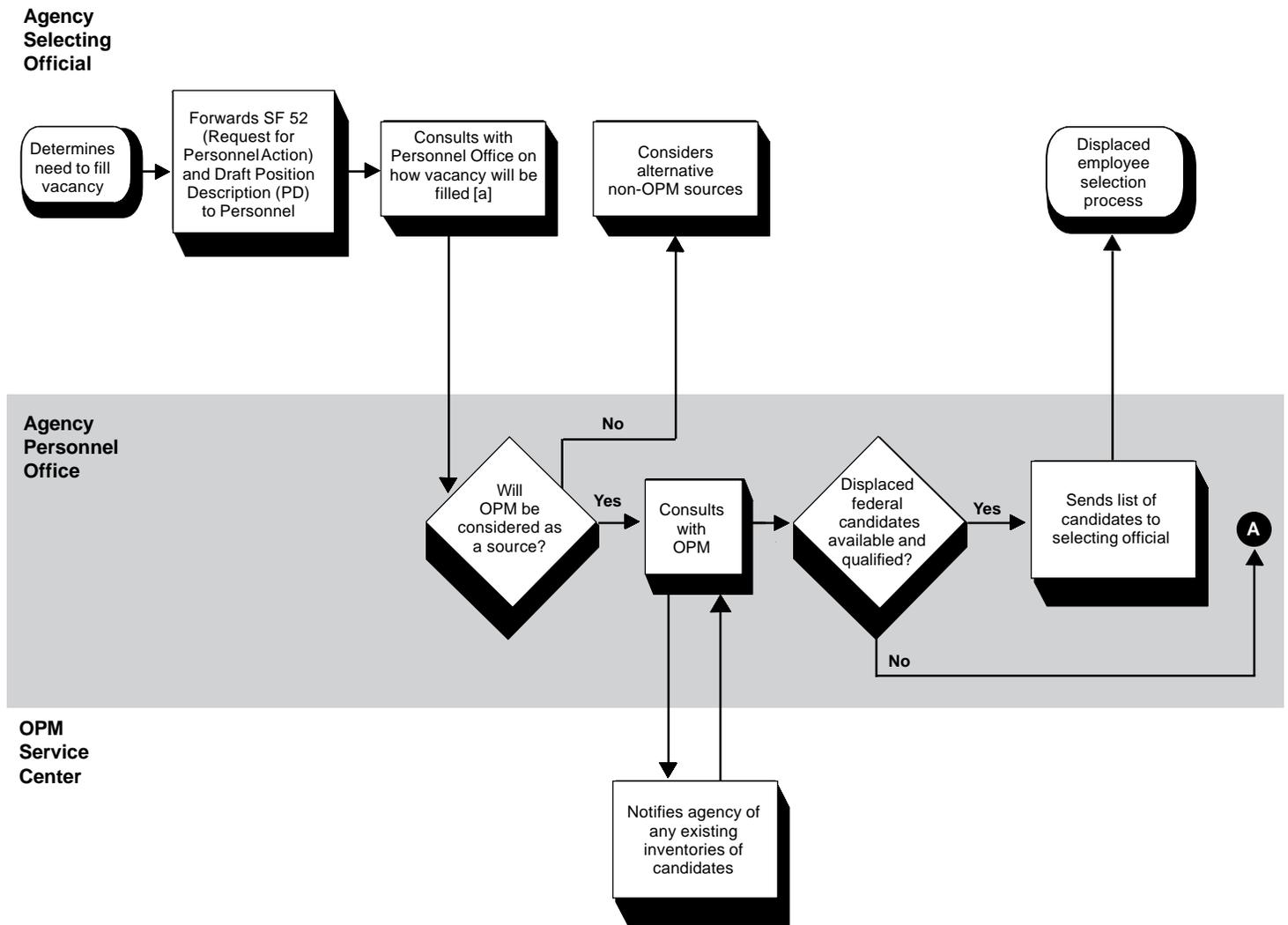
Consistent with the NPR recommendation for greater decentralization of the recruiting and hiring process, this recommendation could give

agencies a greater role in developing procedures that would better balance the needs of managers and veterans.

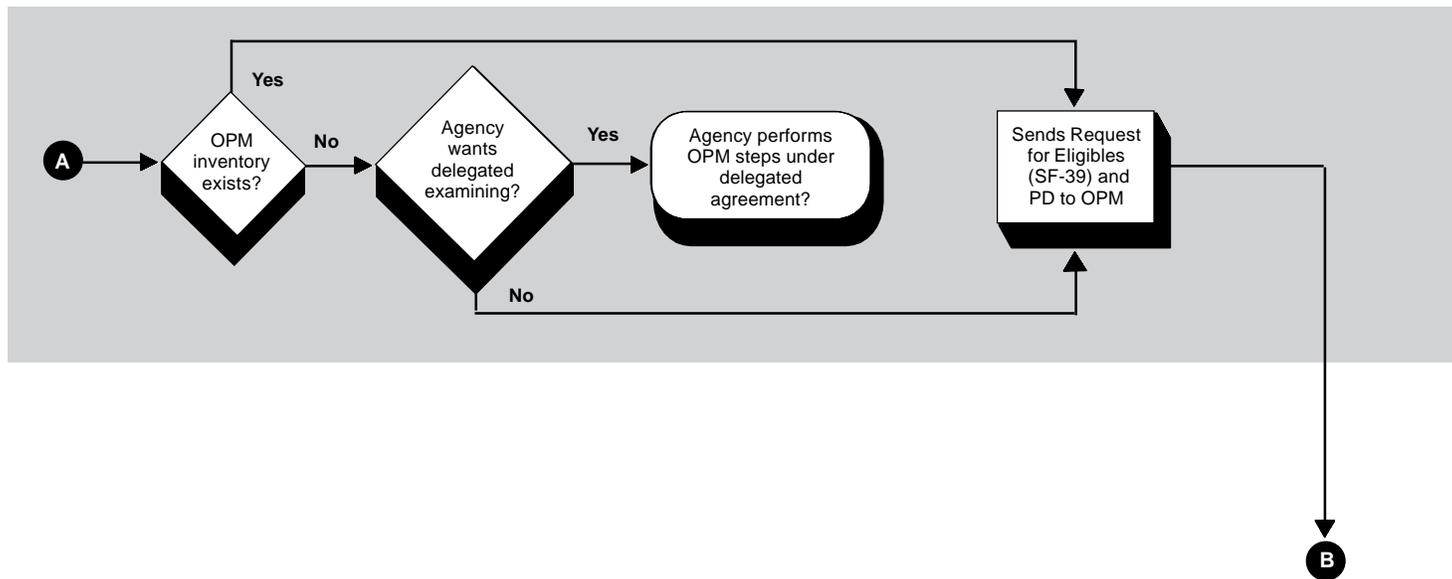
Agency Comments

We requested comments on a draft of this report from the Director of OPM. On March 20, 1995, we met with the Associate Director of the Career Entry Group and other OPM officials to discuss their comments. OPM generally agreed with our findings and is prepared to implement our recommendation. OPM suggested technical changes to ensure that our report adequately reflected the current status of its various initiatives to improve the hiring process, which we have incorporated where appropriate.

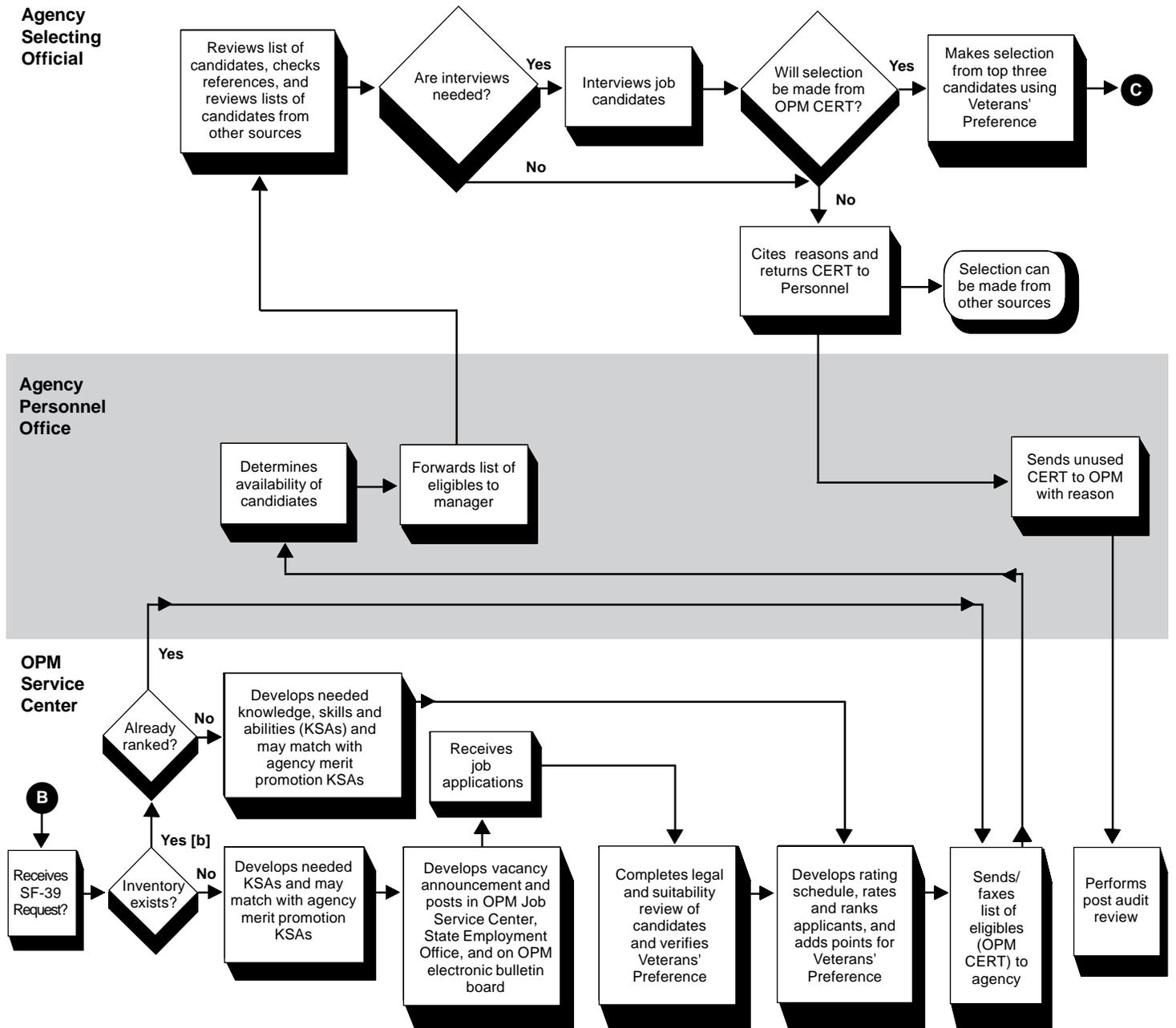
Flow Chart of Hiring Process Using an OPM Certificate



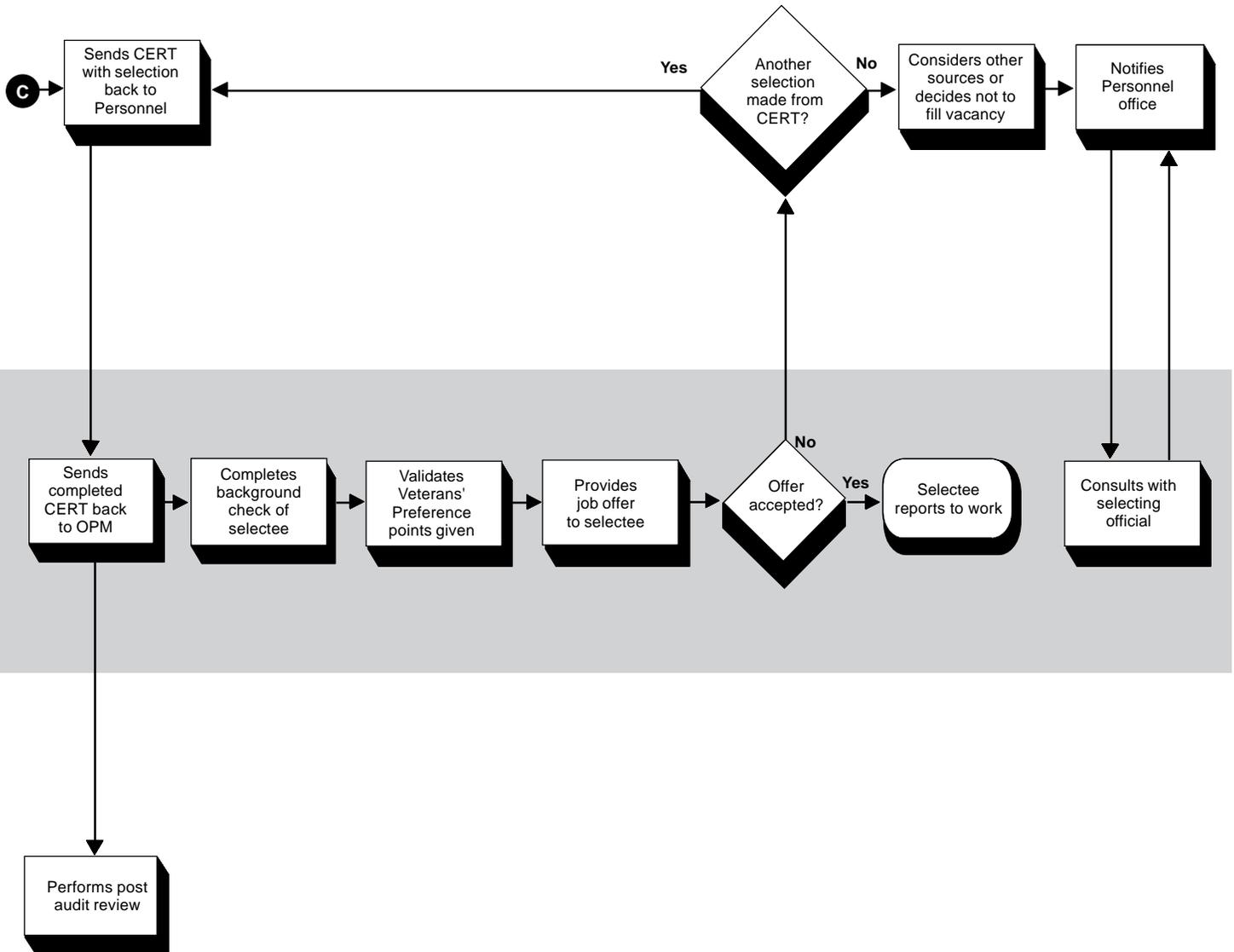
Appendix I
Flow Chart of Hiring Process Using an OPM
Certificate



**Appendix I
Flow Chart of Hiring Process Using an OPM
Certificate**



Appendix I
Flow Chart of Hiring Process Using an OPM
Certificate



^aConsiderations include: what grade levels to recruit, and whether internal sources (e.g., merit promotion), external sources (e.g., OPM or agency delegated examining), or special hiring authorities (e.g., Veterans Readjustment Authority, Handicaped, Outstanding Scholar) will be used. Multiple sources can be used to increase the applicant pool.

Appendix I
Flow Chart of Hiring Process Using an OPM
Certificate

^bIn existing inventories, OPM would have already received applications for the position, completed the legal review, determined suitability, verified 10-point Veterans' Preference, and tentatively verified 5-point Veterans' Preference.

Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to Managers of OPM Service Centers

U.S. General Accounting Office

GAO **Federal Hiring Study: Survey of OPM Officials**

The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO), a Congressional research agency, is studying ways to improve federal hiring procedures. As part of this review, we are surveying officials at Office of Personnel Management (OPM) service centers.

In this questionnaire, we would like you to give us your perceptions of the timeliness of federal hiring processes, their ability to provide agencies with quality job candidates, and ways in which the procedures can be streamlined.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary, but your frank and honest answers will help us identify policies and practices to "reinvent" the federal hiring system. Therefore, your views are critical to our work.

Your response will be kept confidential; no individual answers will be reported in anything we publish. The questionnaire is numbered only to aid us in our follow-up efforts. The questionnaire can be easily answered by checking boxes or filling blanks. It should take no more than 30 minutes to finish.

Please return your completed questionnaire in the enclosed pre-addressed, postage paid envelope within 10 days of receipt. If the envelope is misplaced, the questionnaire can be mailed to:

Susan Iott
U.S. General Accounting Office
Suite 800
1244 Speer Blvd.
Denver, CO 80204

If you have any questions about the survey, please call Ms. Iott at (303) 572-7306 or Robert Goldenkoff at (202) 512-2757.

Thank you for your assistance.

**Appendix II
Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to
Managers of OPM Service Centers**

TIMELINESS of Federal Hiring Process

1. During FY 1992, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the ability of your Service Center's hiring processes to produce a certificate of agency personnel offices in a TIMELY manner? By "timely," we mean that the period between a request for certificate (SF-39 or other similar paperwork) and the receipt of a certificate by the agency personnel office occurs with minimum delay. (Check one box in each row.)

<u>Processes</u>	Not sure/ No basis to judge (1)	Very satisfied (2)	Satisfied (3)	Neither satisfied no dissatisfied (4)	Dissatisfied (5)	Very dissatisfied (6)
1. Administrative Careers with America (ACWA) certification process N = 29	55.2 %	34.5 %	6.9 %	3.4 %	--	--
2. OPM certification process (excluding ACWA) with an existing inventory of applicants N = 30	--	76.7 %	23.3 %	--	--	--
3. OPM certification process (excluding ACWA) without an existing inventory of applicants N = 30	--	33.3 %	40.0 %	3.3 %	23.3 %	--

2. For question 1, if you answered "Dissatisfied" or "Very dissatisfied" for any of the OPM processes, please explain.

**Appendix II
Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to
Managers of OPM Service Centers**

3. During FY 1992, how satisfied or dissatisfied do you think agency personnel officials were with the TIMELINESS of the certificates produced by your Service Center with the processes below? By "timeliness," we mean that the period between a request for a certificate (SF-39 or other similar paperwork) and the receipt of a certificate by the agency personnel office occurs with minimum delay. (Check one box in each row.)

Processes	Not sure/ No basis to judge (1)	Very satisfied (2)	Satisfied (3)	Neither satisfied no dissatisfied (4)	Dissatisfied (5)	Very dissatisfied (6)
1. Administrative Careers with America (ACWA) certification process N = 28	53.6 %	28.6 %	10.7 %	7.1 %	--	--
2. OPM certification process (excluding ACWA) with an existing inventory of applicants N = 30	--	70.0 %	30.0 %	--	--	--
3. OPM certification process (excluding ACWA) without an existing inventory of applicants N = 30	--	16.7 %	50.0 %	13.3 %	20.0 %	--

4. Based upon your knowledge of external hiring actions made in FY 1992 using the OPM certification process, how much time elapses between an agency's request for a list of job candidates from OPM (submission of an SF-39 or similar paperwork authorizing a hire) and the agency personnel office's receipt of that list using the processes listed below? In your opinion, how much time should this process reasonably take? (Please enter the number of days in both columns.)

Process	Not sure/No basis to judge (1)	Average amount of time elapsed in days (2)	Average number of days process should reasonably take (3)
1. Administrative Careers with America (ACWA) certification process	N = 16	N = 13 Average = 3.4	N = 12 Average = 3.7
2. OPM certification process (excluding ACWA) with an existing inventory of applicants	N = 0	N = 26 Average = 4.3	N = 28 Average = 4.1
3. OPM certification process (excluding ACWA) without an existing inventory of applicants	N = 0	N = 28 Average = 30.6	N = 27 Average = 27.5

**Appendix II
Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to
Managers of OPM Service Centers**

5. How often do you collect information, both formal and informal, about the hiring needs of the agencies serviced by your office, paying particular attention to their concerns about timeliness? *(Check one.)*

N = 27

- 1. Weekly **51.9 %**
- 2. Monthly **14.8 %**
- 3. Quarterly **25.9 %**
- 4. Semi-annually **3.7 %**
- 5. Annually **3.7 %**
- 6. Never **--**

6. In your opinion, has the use of the following automated systems decreased, increased, or had no effect on the timeliness of the hiring process? *(Check one box in each row.)*

Processes	Not used/ No basis to judge (1)	Decreased time needed (2)	Had no effect on time needed (3)	Increased time needed (4)
1. Automated Case Examining System (ACES) N = 31	6.5 %	77.4 %	9.7 %	6.5 %
2. OPMSCAN (local desktop scanner system) N = 31	6.5 %	83.9 %	9.7 %	--
3. Alternative Scanning Application Processing (ASAP) N = 31	19.4 %	64.5 %	16.1 %	--
4. Competitive Recruiting and Examining System N = 30	--	80.0 %	20.0 %	--
5. Clerical Local Application Scanning System (CLASS) N = 31	22.6 %	67.7 %	9.7 %	--

**Appendix II
Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to
Managers of OPM Service Centers**

7. How frequently, if at all, does your office use the following automated systems in processing applications or referring candidates? *(Check one box in each row.)*

Processes	Not used/ No basis to judge (1)	Very frequently (2)	Frequently (3)	Neither frequently nor infrequently (4)	Infrequently (5)	Very infrequently (6)
1. Automated Case Examining System (ACES) N = 29	6.9 %	79.3 %	10.3 %	3.4 %	--	--
2. OPMSCAN (local desktop scanner system) N = 30	10.0 %	43.3 %	23.3 %	3.3 %	10.0 %	10.0 %
3. Alternative Scanning Application Processing (ASAP) N = 29	24.1 %	41.4 %	10.3 %	3.4 %	17.2 %	3.4 %
4. Competitive Recruiting and Examining System (CRES) N = 28	--	75.0 %	14.3 %	7.1 %	3.6 %	--
5. Clerical Local Application Scanning System (CLASS) N = 30	26.7 %	53.3 %	13.3 %	3.3 %	3.3 %	--

8. In your opinion, approximately what percent of the requests your office receives to fill a vacancy are accompanied by a specific name request? *(Enter percent, if none enter zero. If not sure, check appropriate box.)*

N = 29 Average = 15.3

_____ percent *(Continue to question 9)*

N = 1

Not sure/No basis to judge *(Skip to question 10)*

9. What effect, if any, does this identification of a desired job candidate by a selecting official prior to a request for a list of eligibles have on the timeliness of the hiring process? *(Check one.)*

N = 29

- 1. No basis to judge --
- 2. Decreases time needed 10.3 %
- 3. No effect on time needed 75.9 %
- 4. Increases time needed 13.8 %

**Appendix II
Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to
Managers of OPM Service Centers**

Ability of Federal Hiring Process to Produce QUALITY Job Candidates

10. During FY 1992, has satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the ability of your Service Center's hiring processes to produce a QUALITY pool of job candidates? By "quality" we mean the candidates exceeded the requirements of the position. (Check one box in each row.)

Processes	Not sure/ No basis to judge (1)	Very satisfied (2)	Satisfied (3)	Neither satisfied no dissatisfied (4)	Dissatisfied (5)	Very dissatisfied (6)
1. Administrative Careers with America (ACWA) certification process N = 28	60.7 %	14.3 %	7.1 %	7.1 %	7.1 %	3.6 %
2. OPM certification process (excluding ACWA) with an existing inventory of applicants N = 30	--	26.7 %	63.3 %	6.7 %	3.3 %	--
3. OPM certification process (excluding ACWA) without an existing inventory of applicants N = 30	--	46.7 %	46.7 %	3.3 %	3.3 %	--

11. For question 10, If you answered "Dissatisfied" or "Very dissatisfied" for any of the OPM processes, please explain.

**Appendix II
Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to
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12. During FY 1992, how satisfied or dissatisfied do you think agency personnel officials were with the ability of your Service Center's hiring processes to produce QUALITY pool of candidates? By "quality" we mean that the candidates exceeded the requirements of the position. (Check one box in each row.)

Processes	Not sure/ No basis to judge (1)	Very satisfied (2)	Satisfied (3)	Neither satisfied no dissatisfied (4)	Dissatisfied (5)	Very dissatisfied (6)
1. Administrative Careers with America (ACWA) certification process N = 27	51.9 %	7.4 %	18.5 %	3.7 %	11.1 %	7.4 %
2. OPM certification process (excluding ACWA) with an existing inventory of applicants N = 30	--	30.0 %	60.0 %	6.7 %	--	3.3 %
3. OPM certification process (excluding ACWA) without an existing inventory of applicants N = 30	--	30.0 %	63.3 %	3.3 %	3.3 %	--

13. How often do you collect information about the hiring needs of the agencies serviced by your office, paying particular attention to their concerns about the quality of job candidates? (Check one.)

N = 26

- 1. Weekly **53.8 %**
- 2. Monthly **3.8 %**
- 3. Quarterly **30.8 %**
- 4. Semi-annually **3.8 %**
- 5. Annually **3.8 %**
- 6. Never **3.8 %**

**Appendix II
Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to
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Effects of Legal Requirements on Timeliness and Quality

14. For external selections agencies made during the past 2 years, what effect, if any, did the following legal requirements have on the amount of TIME needed to fill vacancies? *(Check one box in each row.)*

Legal requirements		Not sure/ No basis to judge (1)	Increased time needed (2)	Had no effect on time needed (3)	Decreased time needed (4)
1. Veteran's preference	N = 31	--	45.2 %	54.8 %	--
2. Processes used to ensure merit principles	N = 31	--	71.0 %	29.0 %	--
3. Rule of Three selection criteria	N = 31	--	51.6 %	48.4 %	--
4. Processes used to ensure EEO/Affirmative Action	N = 31	22.6 %	38.7 %	38.7 %	--
5. Union contracts or agreements	N = 31	45.2 %	16.1 %	38.7 %	--
6. Others (Please specify)	N = 2	--	100.0 %	--	--

15. For external selections agencies made during the past 2 years, what effect, if any, did the following legal requirements have on the agencies' ability to obtain a QUALITY pool of job candidates? *(Check one box in each row.)*

Legal requirements		Not sure/ No basis to judge (1)	Increased quality (2)	Had no effect on quality (3)	Decreased quality (4)
1. Veteran's preference	N = 31	6.5	--	16.1 %	77.4
2. Processes used to ensure merit principles	N = 31	6.5 %	29.0 %	58.1 %	6.5 %
3. Rule of Three selection criteria	N = 31	6.5 %	3.2 %	48.4 %	41.9 %
4. Processes used to ensure EEO/Affirmative Action	N = 31	25.8 %	22.6 %	45.2 %	6.5 %
5. Union contracts or agreements	N = 30	60.0 %	--	33.3 %	6.7 %
6. Others (Please specify)	N = 3	--	33.3 %	--	66.7

**Appendix II
Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to
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Role of OPM in Hiring Process

16. Of the following OPM activities related to the federal hiring process, which should be continued as is with no improvements, which should be continued but with improvements, which should be delegated entirely to agencies, and which should be eliminated completely? *(Check one box in each row.)*

If you indicate improvements are needed or if the activity should be completely eliminated, please make specific suggestions or explanations in the space below.

OPM Activities	Not sure/ No basis to judge (1)	Continue as is with no improvements (2)	Continue but with improvements (3)	Delegate entirely to agencies (4)	Eliminate activity completely (5)
1. Examine, rate, and rank applicants N = 29	--	13.8 %	75.9 %	10.3 %	--
2. Provide federal job information to job applicants N = 31	--	3.2 %	90.3 %	6.5 %	--
3. Monitor hiring activities to ensure they comply with applicable laws and regulations N = 31	--	32.3 %	64.5 %	3.2 %	--
4. Develop standardized written tests N = 31	12.9 %	19.4 %	48.4 %	--	19.4 %
5. Oversee use of Excepted Service appointment authorities N = 31	12.9 %	25.8 %	41.9 %	19.4 %	--
6. Design forms related to entry into federal service (e.g., the SF-171) N = 31	--	9.7 %	90.3 %	--	--
7. Develop and administer qualification standards for eligibility determinations N = 31	--	38.7 %	58.1 %	3.2 %	--
8. Develop classification standards N = 31	--	32.3 %	64.5 %	3.2 %	--
9. Other (Please specify)	--	--	--	--	--

17. If you indicated that an activity could be improved or eliminated, please explain your plans or suggestions for improvement or reason(s) why the activity should be eliminated *(Please identify by the number above.)*

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Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to
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18. In your opinion, for FY 1992, about what percent of OPM certificates were returned without a selection being made? (Enter percent, if none enter zero. If not sure, check appropriate box.)

N = 29 Average = 39.8
 _____ percent

N = 2
 Not sure/No basis to judge

19. How frequently, if at all, were the following reasons cited by agencies for returning OPM certificates without a selection made? (Check one box in each row.)

Reasons cited	Not sure/ No basis to judge (1)	Very frequently (2)	Frequently (3)	Neither frequently nor infrequently (4)	Infrequently (5)	Very infrequently (6)
1. Position abolished N = 30	--	--	16.7 %	10.0 %	33.3 %	40.0 %
2. Hiring freeze N = 31	--	35.5 %	41.9 %	12.9 %	6.5 %	3.2 %
3. Lack of funds N = 31	--	35.5 %	25.8 %	16.1 %	12.9 %	9.7 %
4. Lack of space allocation (FTE) N = 31	3.2 %	9.7 %	16.1 %	19.4 %	12.9 %	38.7
5. Candidates lacked desired qualifications N = 31	--	--	6.5 %	3.2 %	45.2 %	45.2 %
6. Desired candidate not within reach due to higher scoring non- preference eligibles N = 31	3.2 %	--	6.5 %	3.2 %	48.4 %	38.7 %
7. Desired candidate not within reach due to a higher scoring preference eligible N = 31	3.2 %	3.2 %	22.6 %	19.4 %	19.4 %	32.3 %
8. Desired candidate declined offer N = 31	3.2 %	--	6.5 %	22.6 %	38.7 %	29.0 %
9. Other (Please explain) N = 7	--	42.9 %	42.9 %	14.3 %	--	--

**Appendix II
Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to
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Role of Agency Personnelists and Managers in Hiring Process

20. How frequently, if at all, do agency personnelists request your assistance (including telephone inquiries) in working with the following appointment processes or authorities? (Check one box in each row.)

Process or Authorities	Not sure/ No basis to judge (1)	Very frequently (2)	Frequently (3)	Neither frequently nor infrequently (4)	Infrequently (5)	Very infrequently (6)
1. Administrative Careers with America (ACWA) certification process N = 29	10.3 %	--	10.3 %	24.1 %	31.0 %	24.1 %
2. OPM certification process (excluding ACWA) with an existing inventory of applicants N = 30	--	40.0 %	33.3 %	13.3 %	13.3 %	--
3. OPM certification process (excluding ACWA) without an existing inventory of applicants N = 30	--	66.7 %	20.0 %	6.7 %	6.7 %	--
4. Delegated examining process with an existing inventory of applicants N = 30	6.7 %	13.3 %	30.0 %	26.7 %	16.7 %	6.7 %
5. Delegated examining process without an existing inventory of applicants N = 30	3.3 %	23.3 %	50.0 %	16.7 %	6.7 %	--
6. Delegated Direct Hire process (non-clerical) N = 30	--	13.3 %	30.0 %	33.3 %	13.3 %	10.0 %
7. Delegated Direct Hire process (clerical) N = 30	6.7 %	26.7 %	20.0 %	20.0 %	16.7 %	10.0 %
8. Outstanding Scholar Authority N = 30	--	3.3 %	36.7 %	30.0 %	26.7 %	3.3 %
9. Cooperative Education Authority N = 30	--	3.3 %	30.0 %	30.0 %	26.7 %	10.0 %
10. Veterans Readjustment Authority N = 30	--	43.3 %	36.7 %	13.3 %	3.3 %	3.3 %
11. Presidential Management Intern Authority N = 30	--	--	10.0 %	16.7 %	40.0 %	33.3 %
12. Student program authority (e.g., Stay-in-School) N = 30	--	6.7 %	30.0 %	33.3 %	26.7 %	3.3 %
13. Handicapped/Disabled Authority N = 30	--	13.3 %	30.0 %	30.0 %	20.0 %	6.7 %
14. Other Competitive Service authorities (Please specify) N = 15	6.7 %	26.7 %	33.3 %	26.7 %	6.7 %	--
15. Other Excepted Service authorities (Please specify) N = 6	--	16.7 %	16.7 %	33.3 %	33.3 %	--

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Characteristics of the Federal Hiring Process

21. Based on your experience over the past 2 years, do you agree or disagree that the federal hiring process has the following characteristics? (Check one box in each row.)

The federal hiring system is:		Not sure/ No basis to judge (1)	Strongly agree (2)	Generally agree (3)	No opinion either way (4)	Generally disagree (5)	Strongly disagree (6)
1. Open to all	N = 31	--	51.6 %	41.9 %	--	6.5 %	--
2. Free of discrimination	N = 30	3.3 %	26.7 %	60.0 %	10.0 %	--	--
3. Based on objective ratings of job-related factors	N = 31	--	32.3 %	67.7 %	--	--	--
4. Free of personal or political favoritism	N = 30	--	23.3 %	63.3 %	10.0 %	--	--
5. Timely	N = 31	--	3.2 %	54.8 %	--	38.7 %	3.2 %
6. Easy to understand	N = 31	--	3.2 %	9.7 %	3.2 %	41.9 %	41.9 %
7. Other (Please explain)	N = 3	33.3 %	--	--	--	33.3 %	33.3 %

22. For question 21, if you answered "Generally disagree" or "Strongly disagree," for any of the characteristics, please explain.

**Appendix II
Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to
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Improving the Federal Hiring Process

23. During GAO's discussions with personnel and selecting officials, the following suggestions have been made on how to improve the federal hiring process. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with these suggestions. (Check one box in each row.)

Suggestions for Improving Hiring Process	Not sure/ No basis to judge (1)	Strongly disagree (2)	Generally disagree (3)	No opinion either way (4)	Generally agree (5)	Strongly agree (6)
OPM Involvement in Process						
1. OPM should continue to increase the number of hiring delegations given to agencies. N = 30	--	6.7 %	16.7 %	3.3 %	53.3 %	20.0 %
2. OPM should allow agencies to perform parts of the hiring process through partial delegations of authority. N = 31	--	6.5 %	58.1 %	--	--	35.5 %
3. OPM should perform only policy and oversight functions. N = 31	--	29.0 %	45.2 %	--	9.7 %	16.1 %
Selecting Official Discretion						
4. Modify or eliminate the requirement to select from among the top three candidates on a certificate (Rule of Three) to provide a larger pool of qualified applicants. N = 31	--	3.2 %	9.7 %	6.5 %	51.6 %	29.0 %
5. Allow selecting officials to rate and rank applicants rather than OPM or agency personnel officials. N = 31	--	38.7 %	29.0 %	6.5 %	16.1 %	9.7 %
6. Allow selecting officials to change the rating and ranking of job candidates based on personal interviews or job specifications. N = 31	3.2 %	22.6 %	35.5 %	3.2 %	22.6 %	12.9 %
7. Allow personnel office to give selecting officials the option of evaluating applicants against merit criteria approved by the personnel office. N = 31	--	22.6 %	35.5 %	9.7 %	25.8 %	6.5 %
8. Make greater use of subject matter experts in the rating and ranking process. N = 31	--	3.2 %	3.2 %	6.5 %	22.6 %	64.5 %
9. Hold agencies and selecting officials accountable for meeting EEO/AA laws associated with the hiring process on a yearly basis rather than a selection-by-selection basis. N = 31	--	6.5 %	6.5 %	16.1 %	35.5 %	35.5 %
Veterans' Preference						
10. In the competitive hiring process, limit an applicant's use of Veterans' Preference to a single appointment N = 31	--	3.2 %	12.9 %	3.2 %	32.3 %	48.6 %
11. Allow an applicant use Veterans' Preference only for a limited period of time after discharge N = 31	--	6.5 %	9.7 %	--	32.3 %	51.6 %

Question 23 Continued on next page.

**Appendix II
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Managers of OPM Service Centers**

Improvements continued

Suggestions for Improving Hiring Process	Not sure/ No basis to judge (1)	Strongly disagree (2)	Generally disagree (3)	No opinion either way (4)	Generally agree (5)	Strongly agree (6)
12. Give compensable veterans the required 10-point preference without "floating to the top" of the certificate. N = 31	3.2 %	3.2 %	--	--	29.0 %	64.5 %
13. Establish hiring goals for veterans in lieu of the current point system. N = 30	3.3 %	23.3 %	26.7 %	6.7 %	16.7 %	23.3 %
14. Hire veterans non-competitively in lieu of Veterans' Preference, establishing annual goals for veteran hiring. N = 30	--	16.7 %	33.3 %	10.0 %	16.7 %	23.3 %
15. Eliminate Veterans' Preference provisions. N = 31	--	9.7 %	48.4 %	9.7 %	19.4 %	12.9 %
Outstanding Scholar Program						
16. Allow application of Outstanding Scholar provisions to course work at the graduate level. N = 31	--	19.4 %	29.0 %	9.7 %	22.6 %	19.4 %
17. Lower grade-point-average requirements for the Outstanding Scholar Program. N = 31	--	32.3 %	38.7 %	9.7 %	19.4 %	--
18. Allow Outstanding Scholar provisions to apply to all occupations. N = 31	--	12.9 %	25.8 %	6.5 %	35.5 %	19.4 %
19. Allow grade-point-average to apply only to a candidate's major field of study. N = 30	--	10.0 %	36.7 %	16.7 %	23.3 %	13.3 %
Other						
20. Allow applicants who qualify for a position to use their qualification scores for other comparable positions. N = 30	6.7	16.7 %	53.3 %	10.0 %	13.3 %	--
21. Other suggestions (Please specify) _____	--	--	--	--	--	--

24. If you have comments on any of the suggestions listed above, please use the space provided. (Please identify your comments by the number designation used in the preceding question.)

Appendix II
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25. Do you know of any innovative hiring processes at the federal, state, local, or international levels or in the private sector that could be incorporated into the federal hiring process? *(Check one.)*

N = 31

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | 80.6 % |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes - Please explain below: | 19.4 % |

Additional Comments

26. Please provide additional comments if needed on any of the above question or on the overall survey.

Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to Agency Personnel Officials



U.S. General Accounting Office

Federal Hiring Study: Survey of Personnel Officials

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO), a Congressional research agency, is studying whether the federal hiring process is meeting the needs of agencies and job candidates. To do this, we are surveying key users of the federal hiring process, including agency personnel officials and managers who select new hires. Because your opinion is extremely important to us, please take the time to complete the following survey. Your answers and comments will be held in the strictest confidence. The results will be provided in summary form and no individual responses will be identified in the report we publish. With your help, we will be able to identify problems with the hiring process that affect agencies and recommend solutions.

When completing this survey, feel free to obtain the assistance of the personnel staffing specialist or other human resource specialist most familiar with a particular hiring mechanism.

The survey should take about 30 minutes to complete. Please return it within 10 days, using the enclosed self-addressed, postage paid envelope.

If the envelope is misplaced, please mail the completed survey to:

Robert Goldenkoff
U.S. General Accounting Office
441 G Street N.W.
Room 3150
Washington, D.C. 20548

If you have any questions about the survey, please call Thomas Kingham at (303) 572-7330 or Robert Goldenkoff at (202) 512-2757.

Thank you for your assistance.

**Appendix III
Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to
Agency Personnel Officials**

A. TIMELINESS of Federal Hiring Process

1. During FY 1992, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the ability of the following processes or hiring authorities to deliver a list of qualified applicants to a selecting official in a TIMELY manner? (Check one box in each row.)

Processes or Authorities	Not used/ No basis to judge	Very satisfied	Generally satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Generally dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
a. Administrative Careers with America (ACWA) certification process N = 271	N = 1,174	28.0 %	41.2 %	14.3 %	13.9 %	2.6 %
b. OPM certification process (excluding ACWA) <u>with</u> an existing inventory of applicants N = 1,001	N = 439	36.8 %	38.6 %	12.8 %	11.3 %	0.6 %
c. OPM certification process (excluding ACWA) <u>without</u> an existing inventory of applicants N = 970	N = 451	22.0 %	44.6 %	12.9 %	17.9 %	2.5 %
d. Delegated examining process <u>with</u> an existing inventory of applicants N = 650	N = 772	38.5 %	45.0 %	11.9 %	3.7 %	0.9 %
e. Delegated examining process <u>without</u> an existing inventory of applicants N = 796	N = 631	35.0 %	51.7 %	5.8 %	4.0 %	3.5 %
f. Delegated Direct Hire process (non-clerical) N = 767	N = 673	49.5 %	33.4 %	9.3 %	5.3 %	2.6 %
g. Delegated Direct Hire process (clerical) N = 827	N = 596	49.9 %	36.5 %	6.6 %	5.3 %	1.7 %
h. Outstanding Scholar Authority N = 612	N = 817	73.0 %	21.9 %	3.2 %	1.8 %	--
i. Cooperative Education Authority N = 856	N = 571	66.5 %	27.0 %	5.0 %	1.6 %	--
j. Veterans Readjustment Authority N = 1,017	N = 409	58.4 %	35.4 %	4.1 %	2.1 %	--
k. Presidential Management Intern Authority N = 179	N = 1,247	37.8 %	33.8 %	28.4 %	--	--
l. Student program authority (e.g., Stay-in-School) N = 778	N = 645	51.6 %	39.8 %	7.4 %	0.8 %	0.4 %
m. Internal merit promotion process N = 1,346	N = 78	48.1 %	44.6 %	3.4 %	3.7 %	0.3 %
n. Handicapped/Disabled Authority N = 989	N = 436	56.0 %	37.2 %	5.7 %	1.1 %	--
o. Other Competitive Service authorities (Please specify) _____ N = 276	N = 540	63.2 %	26.1 %	4.3 %	6.4 %	--
p. Other Excepted Service authorities (Please specify) _____ N = 426	N = 426	57.3 %	36.3 %	2.8 %	3.1 %	0.5 %

**Appendix III
Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to
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2. For the previous question, if you answered "Generally dissatisfied" or "Very dissatisfied" for any of the processes or authorities you used, please explain.

3. In your opinion, has the use of the following automated systems decreased, increased, or had no effect on the amount of TIME needed to fill vacancies? (Check one box in each row.)

Automated System	Not used/ No basis to judge (1)	Decreased time needed (2)	Had no effect on time needed (3)	Increased time needed (4)
a. Automated Case Examining System (ACES) N = 1,420	85.5 %	9.4 %	4.6 %	0.5 %
b. OPMSCAN (local desktop scanner system) N = 1,420	95.4 %	4.0 %	0.6 %	--
c. Alternative Scanning Application Processing (ASAP) N = 1,412	97.1 %	2.0 %	0.9 %	--
d. Competitive Recruiting and Examining System (CRES) N = 1,416	87.3 %	6.6 %	5.4 %	0.7 %
e. Clerical Local Application Scanning System (CLASS) N = 1,420	90.2 %	5.2 %	4.3 %	0.4 %

4. In your opinion, approximately what percent of the requests you submit to OPM to fill a vacancy are accompanied by a specific name request?
(Enter percent. If none, enter zero. If not sure, check appropriate box.)

N = 1,148
Average = 24 _____ Percent or Not sure N = 246

5. In your opinion, approximately what percent of the requests you submit to agency delegated examining units to fill a vacancy are accompanied by a specific name request? (Enter percent. enter zero. If not sure, check appropriate box.)

N = 1,024
Average = 19 _____ Percent or Not sure N = 278

6. What effect, if any, does the identification of a desired job candidate by a selecting official prior to a request for a referral of eligible job candidates have on the amount of TIME needed to fill a vacancy? (Check one.)

- N =
- 1. Not sure/No basis to judge 28.8 %
 - 2. Decreases the time needed 19.7 %
 - 3. Has no effect on the time needed 43.0 %
 - 4. Increases the time needed 8.5 %

**Appendix III
Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to
Agency Personnel Officials**

7. According to your best estimate, when using the hiring processes or authorities listed below in FY 1992, how much time elapses between a selecting official's request for a list of qualified candidates (submission of an SF-52 or similar paperwork authorizing a hire) and his or her receipt of that list? In your opinion, how much time should this process reasonably take? (Enter number of weeks. If a process or authority was not used, check the appropriate box.)

Processes or Authorities	Not used/ No basis to judge (Check box.)	Average amount of time elapsed (in weeks)	Average number of weeks process should reasonably take
a. Administrative Careers with America (ACWA) certification process	N = 1,176 <input type="checkbox"/>	N = 218 <u>Median = 2</u> Weeks	N = 206 <u>Median = 2</u> Weeks
b. OPM certification process <u>with</u> an existing inventory of applicants	N = 486 <input type="checkbox"/>	N = 894 <u>Median = 3</u> Weeks	N = 857 <u>Median = 2</u> Weeks
c. OPM certification process <u>without</u> an existing inventory of applicants	N = 481 <input type="checkbox"/>	N = 863 <u>Median = 6</u> Weeks	N = 825 <u>Median = 4</u> Weeks
d. Delegated examining process <u>with</u> an existing inventory of applicants	N = 936 <input type="checkbox"/>	N = 449 <u>Median = 2</u> Weeks	N = 388 <u>Median = 2</u> Weeks
e. Delegated examining process <u>without</u> an existing inventory of applicants	N = 722 <input type="checkbox"/>	N = 629 <u>Median = 4</u> Weeks	N = 598 <u>Median = 4</u> Weeks
f. Delegated Direct Hire process (non-clerical)	N = 819 <input type="checkbox"/>	N = 570 <u>Median = 3</u> Weeks	N = 547 <u>Median = 2</u> Weeks
g. Delegated Direct Hire process (clerical)	N = 785 <input type="checkbox"/>	N = 609 <u>Median = 2</u> Weeks	N = 559 <u>Median = 2</u> Weeks
h. Outstanding Scholar Authority	N = 951 <input type="checkbox"/>	N = 443 <u>Median = 1</u> Weeks	N = 400 <u>Median = 1</u> Weeks
i. Cooperative Education Authority	N = 98 <input type="checkbox"/>	N = 624 <u>Median = 2</u> Weeks	N = 587 <u>Median = 2</u> Weeks
j. Veterans Readjustment Authority	N = 534 <input type="checkbox"/>	N = 842 <u>Median = 2</u> Weeks	N = 741 <u>Median = 2</u> Weeks
k. Presidential Management Intern Authority	N = 1,328 <input type="checkbox"/>	N = 81 <u>Median = 3</u> Weeks	N = 65 <u>Median = 2</u> Weeks
l. Student program authority (e.g., Stay-in-School)	N = 735 <input type="checkbox"/>	N = 655 <u>Median = 2</u> Weeks	N = 596 <u>Median = 2</u> Weeks
m. Internal merit promotion process	N = 220 <input type="checkbox"/>	N = 1,118 <u>Median = 4</u> Weeks	N = 1,027 <u>Median = 4</u> Weeks
n. Handicapped/Disabled Authority	N = 606 <input type="checkbox"/>	N = 722 <u>Median = 2</u> Weeks	N = 638 <u>Median = 2</u> Weeks
o. Other Competitive Service authorities (Please specify) _____		N = 173 <u>Median = 4</u> Weeks	N = 164 <u>Median = 4</u> Weeks
p. Other Excepted Service authorities (Please specify) _____		N = 274 <u>Median = 3</u> Weeks	N = 233 <u>Median = 3</u> Weeks

**Appendix III
Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to
Agency Personnel Officials**

B. Ability of Federal Hiring Process to Produce Quality Job Candidates

8. During FY 1992, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the ability of the following processes or hiring authorities to produce a QUALITY pool of available job candidates? By "quality" we mean the candidates exceeded the requirements of the position. (Check one box in each row.)

Processes or Authorities	Not used/ No basis to judge (1)	Very satisfied (2)	Generally satisfied (3)	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (4)	Generally dissatisfied (5)	Very dissatisfied (6)
a. Administrative Careers with America (ACWA) certification process N = 304	(N = 1,126)	5.9 %	44.9 %	21.4 %	18.7 %	9.0 %
b. OPM certification process (excluding ACWA) <u>with</u> an existing inventory of applicants N = 916	(N = 513)	17.9 %	54.9 %	12.7 %	13.1 %	1.5 %
c. OPM certification process (excluding ACWA) <u>without</u> an existing inventory of applicants N = 951	(N = 478)	25.5 %	51.1 %	11.7 %	11.7 %	--
d. Delegated examining process <u>with</u> an existing inventory of applicants N = 578	(N = 851)	25.1 %	61.5 %	9.1 %	1.9 %	2.3 %
e. Delegated examining process <u>without</u> an existing inventory of applicants N = 737	(N = 692)	28.6 %	63.6 %	3.9 %	3.8 %	--
f. Delegated Direct Hire process (non-clerical) N = 697	(N = 732)	45.5 %	43.6 %	8.7 %	0.3 %	1.9 %
g. Delegated Direct Hire process (clerical) N = 713	(N = 703)	42.5 %	45.8 %	6.4 %	3.5 %	1.9 %
h. Outstanding Scholar Authority N = 556	(N = 873)	64.5 %	29.0 %	4.5 %	2.0 %	--
i. Cooperative Education Authority N = 757	(N = 658)	52.4 %	43.1 %	4.2 %	0.3 %	--
j. Veterans Readjustment Authority N = 928	(N = 486)	39.6 %	49.0 %	11.1 %	0.3 %	--
k. Presidential Management Intern Authority N = 162	(N = 1,257)	53.1 %	38.2 %	8.6 %	--	--
l. Student program authority (e.g., Stay-in-School) N = 681	(N = 733)	38.8 %	56.3 %	3.8 %	1.2 %	--
m. Internal merit promotion process N = 1,186	(N = 194)	41.0 %	52.5 %	5.0 %	1.5 %	--
n. Handicapped/Disabled Authority N = 829	(N = 599)	28.6 %	61.6 %	9.8 %	--	--
o. Other Competitive Service authorities (Please specify) _____ N = 223	(N = 462)	51.0 %	33.8 %	15.2 %	--	--
p. Other Excepted Service authorities (Please specify) _____ N = 378	(N = 383)	62.7 %	32.2 %	5.1 %	--	--

**Appendix III
Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to
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9. For the previous question, if you answered "Generally dissatisfied" or "Very dissatisfied" for any of the processes or authorities you used, please explain.

C. Effects of Federal Hiring Process on Personnel Office

10. What adverse effects, if any, have the various hiring processes or authorities used in hiring external job candidates had on your personnel office? *(Please consider such things as excessive use of staff time, excessive paperwork, delayed personnel projects, etc.)*

**Appendix III
Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to
Agency Personnel Officials**

D. Effects of Legal Requirements on Timeliness and Quality

11. For external selections made during the past 2 years, what effect, if any, did the following legal requirements have on the amount of TIME needed to fill vacancies? (Check one box in each row.)

Legal Requirements	Not sure/ No basis to judge	Decreased time needed	Had no effect on time needed	Increased time needed
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
a. Veterans' Preference N = 1,431	14.3 %	6.0 %	39.3 %	40.5 %
b. Processes used to ensure merit principles N = 1,429	9.4 %	--	52.3 %	37.5 %
c. Rule of Three selection criteria N = 1,431	12.9 %	1.1 %	49.0 %	36.9 %
d. Processes used to ensure EEO/Affirmative Action N = 1,414	11.3 %	--	54.3 %	34.4 %
e. Union contracts or agreements N = 1,420	23.1 %	1.7 %	44.8 %	30.4 %
f. Other - Please specify: _____ N = 259	71.8 %	1.9 %	6.3 %	20.0 %

12. For external selections made during the past 2 years, what effect, if any, did the following legal requirements have on your ability to obtain a QUALITY pool of job candidates? (Check one box in each row.)

Legal Requirements	Not sure/ No basis to judge	Decreased quality	Had no effect on quality	Increased quality
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
a. Veterans' Preference N = 1,431	15.9 %	51.5 %	30.0 %	2.7 %
b. Processes used to ensure merit principles N = 1,429	12.3 %	4.7 %	74.6 %	8.5 %
c. Rule of Three selection criteria N = 1,431	16.2 %	39.8 %	41.4 %	2.6 %
d. Processes used to ensure EEO/Affirmative Action N = 1,425	14.6 %	12.5	69.8 %	3.1 %
e. Union contracts or agreements N = 1,420	25.3 %	7.9 %	65.6 %	1.2 %
f. Other - Please specify: _____ N = 289	77.8 %	3.5 %	16.6 %	2.1 %

**Appendix III
Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to
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E. Use of Excepted Service Appointment Authorities

13. If you used certain Excepted Service appointment authorities such as Cooperative Education, student programs, Veterans Readjustment Act, or various authorities for hiring persons with disabilities during fiscal year 1992, what was your reason(s) for using these authorities?

Reasons

- 1 = By using the authority we had more discretion to hire a highly qualified person.
- 2 = The hiring process was quicker than using Competitive Service appointment authorities.
- 3 = We were legally required to use the Excepted Service Appointment authority.
- 4 = The authority was used so that conversion to Competitive Service status could later be made.
- 5 = The authority was used as a probationary tool to evaluate the employee prior to conversion to Competitive Service status.
- 6 = The use of the authority assisted the unit in meeting its EEO/Affirmative Action objectives.
- 7 = By using the authority the position did not count against full-time equivalent requirements.
- 8 = Other (Please specify for each program or authority.)

(Please circle the number(s) of the reasons. If you have not used a specific program or authority, please check the box indicating this.)

Authority	Reason(s) Used (Circle all that apply.)
Cooperative Education Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> Have not used program Reason # 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (If 8, Specify below) _____
Student program/authority such as Stay-in-School, Junior Fellowship, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/> Have not used program Reason # 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (If 8, Specify below) _____
Veterans Readjustment Act Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> Have not used program Reason # 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (If 8, Specify below) _____
Various authorities for hiring persons with disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/> Have not used program Reason # 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (If 8, Specify below) _____
Other Excepted Service Appointment authorities (Please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Have not used program Reason # 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (If 8, Specify below) _____
Other (Please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Have not used program Reason # 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (If 8, Specify below) _____

**Appendix III
Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to
Agency Personnel Officials**

F. Characteristics of the Federal Hiring Process

14. Based on your experiences over the past 2 years, do you agree or disagree that the federal hiring process has the following characteristics? (Check one box in each row.)

The Federal Hiring System is:	Not sure/ No basis to judge (1)	Strongly agree (2)	Generally agree (3)	No opinion either way (4)	Generally disagree (5)	Strongly disagree (6)
a. Open to all N = 1,429	0.8 %	26.9 %	51.8 %	3.6 %	11.7 %	5.2 %
b. Free of discrimination N = 1,429	2.2 %	16.9 %	57.9 %	9.2 %	8.1 %	5.7 %
c. Based on objective ratings of job-related factors N = 1,406	1.0 %	22.5 %	60.0 %	10.2 %	3.8 %	2.5 %
d. Free of personal or political favoritism N = 1,429	1.8 %	14.8 %	55.4 %	14.3 %	12.2 %	1.5 %
e. Timely N = 1,429	--	6.7 %	44.1 %	9.9 %	32.2 %	7.2 %
f. Easy to understand N = 1,429	--	3.7 %	26.1 %	9.8 %	36.2 %	24.2 %
g. Other (Please specify) _____	--	--	--	--	--	--

15. If in the previous question you answered "Generally disagree" or "Strongly disagree", please explain your reasons below.

**Appendix III
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Agency Personnel Officials**

G. Role of OPM in the Federal Hiring Process

16. Of the following OPM activities related to the federal hiring process, which should be continued as is with no improvements, which should be continued but with improvements, which should be delegated entirely to agencies, and which should be eliminated completely? *(Check one box in each row.)*

OPM Activities	Not sure/ No basis to judge (1)	Continue as is with no improvements (2)	Continue with improvements (3)	Delegate entirely to agencies (4)	Eliminate activity completely (5)
a. Examine, rate, and rank applicants N = 1,412	4.1 %	27.3 %	33.4 %	30.5 %	4.7 %
b. Provide federal job information to applicants N = 1,442	2.8 %	27.6 %	63.5 %	6.1 %	--
c. Monitor hiring activities to ensure they comply with applicable laws and regulations N = 1,408	5.5 %	60.8 %	25.0 %	6.9 %	1.8 %
d. Develop standardized written tests N = 1,431	19.7 %	38.8 %	25.9 %	1.0 %	14.7 %
e. Oversee use of Excepted Service appointment authorities N = 1,442	12.8 %	50.4 %	16.3 %	18.4 %	2.1 %
f. Design forms related to entry into federal service (e.g., the SF-171) N = 1,427	3.5 %	46.0 %	46.8 %	2.2 %	1.5 %
g. Develop and administer qualification standards for eligibility determinations N = 1,442	2.0 %	54.6 %	33.3 %	9.6 %	0.6 %
h. Develop classification standards N = 1,432	8.7 %	46.7 %	36.7 %	5.3 %	2.6 %
i. Other <i>(Please specify)</i> _____ N=60	54.2 %	22.2 %	23.5 %	--	--

17. If you indicated that the activity should be improved or eliminated, please explain your suggestion(s) for improvement or reason(s) why the activity should be eliminated. *(Please identify by letter designation in the previous question.)*

**Appendix III
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18. Have any agency or OPM oversight activities examined aspects of the hiring process that could affect the timeliness of the process or the quality of external job candidates? (Check one.)

N = 1284

1. No **89%**
2. Yes ---> Please explain below. **11%**

H. Returned Certificates Without a Hiring Selection Being Made

19. To your knowledge, during fiscal year 1992, about what percent of OPM or agency certificates were returned without a selection being made? (Enter percent, if none enter zero. If not sure check box.) **N = 126**

Median = 10 Percent or Not sure/no basis to judge **29% N = 419**
N = 981

20. How frequently, if at all, were the following reasons cited for returning OPM or agency certificates without a selection? (Check one box in each row.)

Reasons Cited	Not sure/ No basis to judge (1)	Very frequently (2)	Somewhat frequently (3)	Neither frequently nor infrequently (4)	Somewhat infrequently (5)	Very infrequently if at all (6)
a. Position abolished N = 1,261	25.9 %	1.4 %	8.9 %	8.6 %	7.9 %	47.3 %
b. Hiring freeze N = 1,283	25.4 %	8.7 %	15.9 %	8.2 %	16.1 %	25.8 %
c. Lack of funds N = 1,250	26.4 %	6.0 %	12.4 %	10.7 %	8.7 %	35.7 %
d. Lack of Space Allocation (FTE) N = 1,259	33.8 %	3.0 %	7.0 %	9.5 %	6.5 %	40.3 %
e. Candidates lacked desired qualifications N = 1,259	28.4 %	7.5 %	18.3 %	20.3 %	10.3 %	15.2 %
f. Desired candidates not within reach due to a higher scoring preference eligible N = 1,276	28.6 %	7.2 %	22.4 %	12.6 %	13.1 %	16.0 %
g. Desired candidate not within reach due to higher scoring non- preference eligible N = 1,259	31.0 %	2.9 %	11.8 %	18.5 %	17.4 %	18.5 %
h. Desired candidate declined offer N = 1,255	25.8 %	2.0 %	8.7 %	16.5 %	23.1 %	24.0 %
i. Other (Please specify) _____ N = 269	44.2 %	24.8 %	25.5 %	0.7 %	4.9 %	--

**Appendix III
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21. In those instances when you have returned a certificate without selecting a candidate from the certificate, how often, if at all, did you make a selection from another source such as internal merit promotion? *(Check one.)*

N = 1,353

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure / no basis to judge | 17.7 % |
| 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Almost or almost always | 13.2 % |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Most of the time | 20.6 % |
| 4. <input type="checkbox"/> As often as not | 8.8 % |
| 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Some of the time | 25.8 % |
| 6. <input type="checkbox"/> Never or almost never | 13.9 % |

22. In your opinion, what are the impacts, if any, on your office if an OPM or agency certificate is returned without a selection being made? *(Check all that apply.)*

THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE RESPONDENTS EQUALS 1,446.

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> No impacts | N = 177 |
| 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Additional staff time to produce a new certificate | N = 860 |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Additional paperwork to produce a new certificate | N = 767 |
| 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Production of other (unrelated) certificates delayed | N = 298 |
| 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Agency projects delayed | N = 524 |
| 6. <input type="checkbox"/> Costs in preparing a certificate from which a selection was not made | N = 571 |
| 7. <input type="checkbox"/> Discouragement on the part of agency personnel for an effort that may have been unnecessary | N = 725 |
| 8. <input type="checkbox"/> Other impact(s) - Please describe:
_____ | N = 121 |

**Appendix III
Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to
Agency Personnel Officials**

I. Improving the Federal Hiring Process

23. During GAO's discussions with personnel and selecting officials, the following suggestions have been made on how to improve the federal hiring process. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with these suggestions. (Check one box in each row.)

Suggestions for Improving Hiring Process	Not sure/ No basis to judge (1)	Strongly disagree (2)	Generally disagree (3)	No opinion either way (4)	Generally agree (5)	Strongly agree (6)
OPM Involvement in Process						
a. OPM should continue to increase the number of hiring delegations given to agencies. N = 1,413	4.1 %	3.3 %	6.7 %	2.8 %	44.5 %	38.6 %
b. OPM should allow agencies to perform parts of the hiring process through partial delegations of authority. N = 1,378	6.8 %	2.4 %	9.3 %	9.4 %	53.6 %	18.6 %
c. OPM should perform only policy and oversight functions. N = 1,412	2.4 %	6.3 %	20.1 %	12.4 %	35.8 %	23.0 %
Selecting Official Discretion						
d. Modify or eliminate the requirement to select from among the top three candidates on a certificate (Rule of Three) to provide a larger pool of qualified applicants. N = 1,437	--	3.5 %	6.4 %	0.8 %	32.0 %	57.3 %
e. Allow selecting officials to rate and rank applicants rather than OPM or agency personnel officials. N = 1,434	0.6 %	25.0 %	34.6 %	8.1 %	21.2 %	10.4 %
f. Allow selecting officials to change the rating and ranking of job candidates based on personal interviews or job specifications. N = 1,443	--	20.5 %	31.0 %	8.1 %	27.5 %	13.0 %
g. Allow personnel office to give selecting officials the option of evaluating applicants against merit criteria approved by the personnel office. N = 1,434	5.6 %	10.1 %	17.9 %	11.3 %	43.1 %	12.0 %
h. Make greater use of subject matter experts in the rating and ranking process. N = 1,443	1.0 %	2.3 %	3.2 %	9.4 %	57.7 %	26.3 %
i. Hold agencies and selecting officials accountable for meeting EEO/AA laws associated with the hiring process on a yearly basis rather than a selection-by-selection basis. N = 1,426	3.0 %	6.9 %	6.2 %	23.8 %	31.1 %	29.0 %

Question 23 Continued on next page.

**Appendix III
Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to
Agency Personnel Officials**

Question 23 - Continued.

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with these suggestions. (Check one box in each row.)

Suggestions for Improving Hiring Process	Not sure/ No basis to judge (1)	Strongly disagree (2)	Generally disagree (3)	No opinion either way (4)	Generally agree (5)	Strongly agree (6)
Veterans' Preference						
j. In the competitive hiring process, limit an applicant's use of Veterans' Preference to a single appointment. N = 1,431	4.0 %	4.6 %	9.8 %	11.5 %	32.1 %	38.1 %
k. Allow an applicant to use Veterans' Preference only for a limited period of time after discharge. N = 1,431	2.0 %	5.9 %	13.7 %	9.5 %	30.3 %	38.5 %
l. Give compensable veterans the required 10-point preference without "floating to the top" of the certificate. N = 1,423	3.1 %	4.5 %	2.8 %	3.7 %	35.7 %	50.3 %
m. Establish hiring goals for veterans in lieu of the current point system. N = 1,404	7.5 %	8.7 %	19.9 %	28.7 %	20.8 %	14.4 %
n. Eliminate Veterans' Preference provisions. N = 1,422	3.5 %	20.7 %	30.2 %	11.4 %	13.8 %	20.4 %
Outstanding Scholar Program						
o. Allow application of Outstanding Scholar provisions to course work at the graduate level. N = 1,407	18.3 %	3.5 %	5.5 %	18.5 %	32.5 %	21.7 %
p. Lower grade-point-average requirements for the Outstanding Scholar Program. N = 1,399	16.6 %	21.0 %	28.6 %	10.9 %	13.1 %	9.7 %
q. Allow Outstanding Scholar provisions to apply to all occupations. N = 1,407	16.8 %	2.7 %	6.3 %	7.8 %	36.3 %	30.0 %
r. Allow grade point average to apply only to a candidate's major field of study. N = 1,407	16.1 %	9.0 %	25.1 %	14.2 %	24.4 %	11.3 %
Other						
s. Allow applicants who qualify for a position to use their qualification scores for other comparable positions. 1,431	9.3 %	9.8 %	10.0 %	27.7 %	37.5 %	5.7 %
t. Other suggestions (Please specify) _____ N=52	22.2 %	--	--	56.2 %	--	21.6 %
_____	--	--	--	--	--	--

**Appendix III
Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to
Agency Personnel Officials**

24. If you have any comments on any of the suggestions listed in question 21, please use the space provided.
(Please identify your comments using the letter designation used in question 21.)

25. Do you know of any innovative hiring processes at the federal, state, local, or international levels or in the private sector that could be incorporated into the federal hiring process?

N = 1,261

1. No **92.4 %**
2. Yes ---> *Please explain below:* **7.6 %**

J. Additional Comments

26. Please provide additional comments if needed on any of the above questions or on the overall survey.

Please return your questionnaire in the envelope provided.
Thank you very much for your assistance.

Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to Selecting Officials on Their Perceptions of Specific Hiring Actions



U.S. General Accounting Office

Federal Hiring Study: Survey of Selecting Officials Part A - Specific Hiring Actions

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO), a Congressional research agency, is studying whether the federal hiring process is meeting the needs of agencies and job candidates. To do this, we are surveying key users of the federal hiring process, including agency personnel officials and managers who select new external hires. This questionnaire is made up of two parts. This questionnaire, Part A, asks a small number of questions concerning a specific hiring action. This action is shown in the following label:

You may receive more than one copy the Part A questionnaire. For each Part A questionnaire that you receive, please answer the questions for the action shown on the attached label.

Also contained in the mailing is a Part B questionnaire. This questionnaire asks about your general experiences with the federal hiring process as a whole. You will receive only one copy of the Part B questionnaire.

Your answers and comments for both questionnaires will be held in the strictest confidence. No individual responses will be identified in the report we publish. With your help, we will be able to identify problems with the hiring process that affect agency managers and recommend solutions.

Please mail all of your completed questionnaires back in the same pre-addressed envelope within 10 days of receipt. If the envelope is misplaced, please mail the completed questionnaires to:

Robert Goldenkoff
U.S. General Accounting Office
441 G Street N.W.
Room 3150
Washington, D.C. 20548

If you have any questions about the survey, please call Thomas Kingham at (303) 572-7330 or Robert Goldenkoff at (202) 512-2757.

Thank you for your assistance.

1. Did you make the appointment shown on the above label?

N = 224,451

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes --> (Continue with Question 2.) | 100 % |
| 2. <input type="checkbox"/> No | 0 % |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure | 0 % |

Questionnaire continues on other side.

**Appendix IV
Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to
Selecting Officials on Their Perceptions of
Specific Hiring Actions**

2. Is the information shown on the label on the cover page of this survey correct? *(Check one.)*

N = 216,024

- 1. Yes --> *(Continue with Question 3.)* **93.6 %**
- 2. No --> *(Please make any necessary corrections on the label and continue with question 3.)* **6.4 %**

3. For the hiring selection identified on the label, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with how **TIMELY** you were able to obtain a referral of eligible job candidates from your personnel office? *(Check one.)*

N = 215,876

- 1. Very satisfied **28.7 %**
 - 2. Generally satisfied **39.1 %**
 - 3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied **12.0 %**
 - 4. Generally dissatisfied **6.3 %**
 - 5. Very dissatisfied **2.8 %**
 - 6. Not sure/No basis to judge **11.1 %**
4. If you were generally dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the timeliness of the above referral, please explain your reasons below.

5. For the hiring selection identified on the label, had you found a job candidate you desired before your request for a referral of job candidates? *(Check one.)*

N = 211,899

- 1. Yes --> *(Continue with Question 6.)* **24.6 %**
- 2. No --> *(Skip to Question 7.)* **75.4 %**

6. What effect, if any, did this pre-identification of a job candidate have on the time needed to fill the vacancy? *(Check one.)*

N = 52,314

- 1. Not sure / No basis to judge **18.7 %**
- 2. Decreased the time needed **42.3 %**
- 3. Had no effect on the time needed **34.9 %**
- 4. Increased the time needed **4.1 %**

7. For the hiring selection identified on the label, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the **QUALITY** of the job candidates available? *(Check one.)*

By quality we mean the extent to which the candidates met or exceeded the requirements of the position.

N = 212,887

- 1. Very satisfied **26.2 %**
- 2. Generally satisfied **48.3 %**
- 3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied **10.7 %**
- 4. Generally dissatisfied **5.0 %**
- 5. Very dissatisfied **1.7 %**
- 6. Not sure/No basis to judge **8.1 %**

8. If you were generally dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the quality of the job applicants, please explain your reasons below.

Please complete all Part A Questionnaires, then,
complete the Part B Questionnaire.
Thank you very much.

Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to Selecting Officials on Their General Experiences With the Federal Hiring System



U.S. General Accounting Office

Federal Hiring Study: Survey of Selecting Officials

Part B - General Experiences with the Federal Hiring System

INTRODUCTION

This is Part B of the U.S. General Accounting Office's survey of managers who select new external hires. As we mentioned in the Introduction section of the other questionnaire you received in this mailing, the Part B questionnaire asks about your general experiences with the federal hiring process as a whole.

As was the case for Part A, your answers and comments will be held in the strictest confidence. No individual responses will be identified in the report we publish. Your answers and those of other selecting officials will allow us to identify problems with the hiring process that affect agency managers and will allow us to recommend solutions. The Part B questionnaire should only take about 15 minutes to complete.

Please mail all of your completed questionnaires in the same pre-addressed envelope within 10 days of receipt. If the envelope is misplaced, the return address can be found on the Part A questionnaire.

If you have any questions about the survey, please call Thomas Kingham at (303) 572-7330 or Robert Goldenkoff at (202) 512-2757.

Thank you for your assistance.

1. Please estimate the number of external selections (new hires, both permanent and temporary) you made during fiscal year 1992. These are selections that involved hiring job candidates who were not already employed by your agency prior to selection.

_____ Number of permanent fiscal year 1992 appointments

_____ Number of temporary fiscal year 1992 appointments

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2. For the external selections you made during the past 2 years, what effect, if any, did the following legal requirements have on the amount of TIME needed to fill the vacancies? (Check one box in each row.)

Legal Requirements	Not sure/ No basis to judge (1)	Decreased time needed (2)	Had no effect on time needed (3)	Increased time needed (4)
a. Veterans' Preference N = 11,497	25.0 %	4.2 %	52.1 %	18.7 %
b. Process used to ensure merit principles N = 11,440	26.1 %	0.1 %	45.8 %	28.0 %
c. Rule of Three selection criteria N = 11,337	37.1 %	1.4 %	45.7 %	15.8 %
d. Processes used to ensure EEO/Affirmative Action N = 11,495	23.3 %	0.8 %	57.7 %	18.2 %
e. Union contracts or agreements N = 11,432	32.8 %	0.2 %	61.9 %	5.1 %
f. Other (Please specify: _____) N = 1,299	28.3 %	6.9 %	30.8 %	34.0 %

3. For the external selections you made during the past 2 years, what effect, if any, did the following legal requirements have on your ability to obtain a QUALITY pool of job candidates? (Check one box in each row.)

Legal Requirements	Not sure/ No basis to judge (1)	Decreased time needed (2)	Had no effect on time needed (3)	Increased time needed (4)
a. Veterans' Preference N = 11,534	21.3 %	19.7 %	55.9 %	3.2 %
b. Process used to ensure merit principles N = 11,490	22.8 %	6.4 %	57.7 %	13.2 %
c. Rule of Three selection criteria N = 11,353	31.2 %	9.9 %	54.3 %	4.5 %
d. Processes used to ensure EEO/Affirmative Action N = 11,502	20.6 %	10.5 %	66.4 %	2.5 %
e. Union contracts or agreements N = 11,309	31.5 %	1.8 %	66.7 %	--
f. Other (Please specify: _____) N = 850	36.1 %	27.3 %	30.3 %	6.2 %

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4. Based on your experiences over the past 2 years, do you agree or disagree that the federal hiring process has the following characteristics? *(Check one box in each row.)*

The Federal Hiring System is:	Not sure/ No basis to judge (1)	Strongly agree (2)	Generally agree (3)	No opinion either way (4)	Generally disagree (5)	Strongly disagree (6)
a. Open to all N = 11,385	4.6 %	16.7 %	45.1 %	6.0 %	18.4 %	9.2 %
b. Free of discrimination N = 11,431	3.0 %	18.5 %	48.0 %	12.4 %	13.1 %	4.9 %
c. Based on objective ratings of job-related factors N = 11,507	4.7 %	14.9 %	50.0 %	10.7 %	15.2 %	4.3 %
d. Free of personal or political favoritism N = 11,530	6.1 %	15.4 %	43.1 %	14.8 %	17.2 %	3.4 %
e. Timely N = 11,536	2.4 %	3.9 %	31.4 %	10.3 %	34.3 %	17.8 %
f. Easy to understand N = 11,385	3.8 %	3.2 %	27.0 %	17.6 %	32.4 %	16.0 %
g. Other (Please specify: _____ N = 521	45.3 %	4.0 %	--	0.8 %	0.2 %	49.7 %

5. If you answered "Generally disagree" or "Strongly disagree" for question 4, please explain your reasons below.

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6. During fiscal year 1992, have you ever returned a list of eligible external candidates to the personnel office without making a selection from that list? (Check one.)

N = 11,527

1. Yes --> (Continue with Question 7.) 24.8 %
2. No --> (Skip to Question 9.) 75.2 %

7. During fiscal year 1992, about what percent of OPM or agency certificates did you return without a selection being made? (Enter percent or check box.)

N = 1,257

Median = 20 Percent

or

N = 1,585 Not sure/no basis to judge

8. Which of the following explains why you have returned a list(s) of eligible external candidates without making a selection from that list? (Check all that apply.)

The number of eligible respondents equals 3,062.

1. Position abolished N = 112
2. Hiring freeze N = 702
3. Lack of funds N = 293
4. Lack of space allocation (FTE) N = 288
5. Candidates lacked desired qualifications N = 2,144
6. Desired candidates not within reach due to higher scoring preference eligibles N = 756
7. Desired candidates not within reach due to higher scoring non-preference eligibles N = 484
8. Desired candidate declined offer N = 1,173
9. Other - Please specify: N = 422

9. In those instances when you have returned a certificate without selecting a candidate from the certificate, how often, if at all, did you make a selection from another source such as internal merit promotion? (Check one.)

N = 2,828

1. Not sure / no basis to judge 13.6 %
2. Always or almost always 6.0 %
3. Most of the time 11.6 %
4. As often as not 2.8 %
5. Some of the time 20.7 %
6. Never or almost never 45.3 %

10. In your opinion, what have been the impacts, if any, on your office if you return an OPM or agency certificate without making a selection? (Check all that apply.)

The number of eligible respondents equals 3,062.

1. No impacts N = 742
2. Additional staff time to prepare request for a new candidate N = 1,329
3. Additional paperwork to prepare request for a new candidate N = 1,422
4. Agency projects delayed N = 982
5. Unit having difficulties accomplishing work objectives N = 1,371
6. Problems meeting EEO/Affirmative Action goals N = 380
7. Other - Please specify: N = 152

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Improving the Federal Hiring Process

11. During GAO's discussions with personnel and selecting officials, the following suggestions have been made on how to improve the federal hiring process. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with these suggestions. *(Check one box in each row.)*

Suggestions for Improving Hiring Process	Not sure/ No basis to judge (1)	Strongly disagree (2)	Generally disagree (3)	No opinion either way (4)	Generally agree (5)	Strongly agree (6)
OPM Involvement in Process						
a. OPM should continue to increase the number of hiring delegations given to agencies. N = 11,346	9.4 %	2.7 %	2.8 %	9.0 %	39.3 %	36.7 %
b. OPM should allow agencies to perform parts of the hiring process through partial delegations of authority. N = 11,356	9.5 %	2.0 %	2.6 %	11.5 %	40.5 %	33.9 %
c. OPM should perform only policy and oversight functions. N = 11,422	7.3 %	2.1 %	3.1 %	13.1 %	35.5 %	38.9 %
Selecting Official Discretion						
d. Modify or eliminate the requirement to select from among the top three candidates on a certificate (Rule of Three) to provide a larger pool of qualified applicants. N = 11,432	3.8 %	2.3 %	12.0 %	12.9 %	34.4 %	34.7 %
e. Allow selecting officials to rate and rank applicants rather than OPM or agency personnel officials. N = 11,412	1.6 %	6.9 %	15.0 %	10.3 %	37.4 %	28.8 %
f. Allow selecting officials to change the rating and ranking of job candidates based on personal interviews or job specifications. N = 11,389	1.7 %	5.6 %	5.9 %	11.1 %	46.9 %	28.7 %
g. Allow personnel office to give selecting officials the option of evaluating applicants against merit criteria approved by the personnel office. N = 11,441	6.5 %	3.4 %	4.3 %	15.6 %	49.0 %	21.1 %
h. Make greater use of subject matter experts in the rating and ranking process. N = 11,440	3.4 %	1.9 %	8.9 %	11.1 %	46.3 %	28.4 %
i. Hold agencies and selecting officials accountable for meeting EEO/AA laws associated with the hiring process on a yearly basis rather than a selection-by-selection basis. N = 11,441	7.2 %	4.0 %	7.0 %	23.8 %	34.3 %	23.6 %

Question 11 Continued on next page.

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Question 11 - Continued.

Suggestions for Improving Hiring Process	Not sure/ No basis to judge (1)	Strongly disagree (2)	Generally disagree (3)	No opinion either way (4)	Generally agree (5)	Strongly agree (6)
Veterans' Preference						
j. In the competitive hiring process, limit an applicant's use of Veterans' Preference to a single appointment. N = 11,315	6.3 %	11.2 %	15.0 %	18.8 %	29.9 %	18.8 %
k. Allow an applicant to use Veterans' Preference only for a limited period of time after discharge. N = 11,310	3.5 %	13.5 %	15.7 %	16.6 %	32.2 %	18.4 %
l. Give compensable veterans the required 10-point preference without "floating to the top" of the certificate. N = 11,270	9.2 %	2.8 %	6.4 %	21.5 %	38.4 %	21.8 %
m. Establish hiring goals for veterans in lieu of the current point system. N = 11,259	8.5 %	15.3 %	18.1 %	27.5 %	19.9 %	10.6 %
n. Eliminate Veterans' Preference provisions. N = 11,233	4.6 %	23.6 %	30.2 %	18.9 %	12.4 %	10.3 %
Outstanding Scholar Program						
o. Allow application of Outstanding Scholar provisions to course work at the graduate level. N = 11,315	19.4 %	0.3 %	4.5 %	29.6 %	30.8 %	15.4 %
p. Lower grade-point-average requirements for the Outstanding Scholar Program. N = 11,311	20.6 %	10.1 %	24.6 %	30.5 %	10.1 %	4.2 %
q. Allow Outstanding Scholar provisions to apply to all occupations. N = 11,291	19.7 %	2.6 %	7.4 %	28.3 %	28.8 %	13.0 %
r. Allow grade point average to apply only to a candidate's major field of study. N = 11,241	19.2 %	2.0 %	21.7 %	23.8 %	26.6 %	6.8 %
Other						
s. Allow applicants who qualify for a position to use their qualification scores for other comparable positions. N = 11,091	11.2 %	5.3 %	8.4 %	23.1 %	44.3 %	7.7 %
t. Other suggestions (Please specify) _____ N = 296	42.3 %	0.3 %	--	18.6 %	5.1 %	33.6 %
_____ N = 106	10.9 %	0.9 %	--	--	--	88.1 %

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12. If you have any comments on any of the suggestions listed in question 11, please use the space provided. *(Please identify your comments using the letter designation used in question 11. You may continue on the following page.)*

13. Please provide additional comments if needed on any of the above questions or on the overall survey.

Please return your questionnaire in the envelope provided.
Thank you very much for your assistance.

Aggregate Results for Questionnaire Sent to Recent Hires



U.S. General Accounting Office

Federal Hiring Study: Survey of Recent Hires

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO), a Congressional research agency, is studying whether the federal hiring process is meeting the needs of agencies and job candidates. To do this, we are surveying key users of the federal hiring process, including agency personnel officials and managers, and recently hired employees. Because your opinion is extremely important to us, please take the time to complete the following survey.

Your answers and comments will be held in the strictest confidence. No individual responses will be identified in the report we publish. With your help, we will be able to identify problems with the hiring process that affect job applicants and recommend solutions.

The survey should take about 15 minutes to complete. Please return it within 10 days, using the enclosed self-addressed, postage paid envelope.

If the envelope is misplaced, please mail the completed survey to:

Robert Goldenkoff
U.S. General Accounting Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Room 3150
Washington, D.C. 20548

If you have any questions about the survey, please call (Collect) Thomas Kingham at (303) 572-7330 or Robert Goldenkoff at (202) 512-2757.

Thank you for your assistance.

1. Agency records indicate you were hired by the federal government for the following position:

Is this correct? *(Check one.)*

N = 217,900

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes --> <i>(Please continue with Question 2.)</i> | 89.2 % |
| 2. <input type="checkbox"/> No --> <i>(Do not complete the survey. Please return it in the envelope provided. Thank you.)</i> | 10.8 % |

Please note: Unless otherwise specified, all questions refer to the above position.

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2. Are you still employed in this position? *(Check one.)*

N = 201,000

- 1. Yes **87.0 %**
- 2. No **13.0 %**

3. Were you already a civilian federal employee when you accepted this appointment? *(Check one.)*

N = 200,475

- 1. Yes **13.8 %**
- 2. No **86.2 %**

4. Had you worked for the federal government as a civilian within 3 years prior to this job? *(Check one.)*

N = 200,227

- 1. Yes **26.8 %**
- 2. No **73.2 %**

5. Did you claim Veterans' Preference when you applied for the federal position?

N = 200,403

- 1. Yes **24.0 %**
- 2. No **72.8 %**
- 3. Unsure **3.3 %**

6. Did you take a written examination such as Administrative Careers With America (ACWA) to become eligible for this position? *(Check one.)*

N = 200,527

- 1. No --> *(Continue with Question 7.)* **87.8 %**
- 2. Yes --> *(Skip to Question 9.)* **12.2 %**

7. If you took no written examination, approximately how many weeks did it take from the time you submitted your **job application** for the federal position to the time you were offered the job? *(Enter number of weeks.)*

N = 165,246
Median of Averages = 8
_____ Weeks

8. In your opinion, how reasonable or unreasonable was this amount of time? *(Check one.)*

N = 173,946

- 1. Very reasonable **34.6 %**
- 2. Somewhat reasonable **23.0 %**
- 3. Neither reasonable nor unreasonable **10.7 %**
- 4. Somewhat unreasonable **15.3 %**
- 5. Very unreasonable **5.9 %**
- 6. Unsure/No basis to judge **10.5 %**

(Skip to Question 12.)

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9. If you took a written examination, in your opinion, to what extent, if at all, did the written exam objectively measure your qualifications to fill the position? *(Check one.)*

N = 24,553

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> To a very great extent | 1.9 % |
| 2. <input type="checkbox"/> To a great extent | 12.9 % |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> To a moderate extent | 48.1 % |
| 4. <input type="checkbox"/> To some extent | 15.0 % |
| 5. <input type="checkbox"/> To little or no extent | 20.7 % |
| - - - - - | |
| 6. <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure/No basis to judge | 1.5 % |

10. Approximately how many weeks did it take from the time you took the exam until you were offered a federal job? *(Enter number.)*

N = 22,886

Median of Averages = 14
_____ Weeks

11. In your opinion, how reasonable or unreasonable was this amount of time? *(Check one.)*

N = 23,965

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Very reasonable | 16.1 % |
| 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat reasonable | 22.3 % |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Neither reasonable nor unreasonable | 16.6 % |
| 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat unreasonable | 17.3 % |
| 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Very unreasonable | 23.7 % |
| - - - - - | |
| 6. <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure/No basis to judge | 4.1 % |

12. In general, after you have applied for a job, at what point does the wait for the job offer become unreasonable?

The wait becomes unreasonable after: *(Check one.)*

N = 198,589

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> 2 weeks | 6.7 % |
| 2. <input type="checkbox"/> 3 to 4 weeks | 20.2 % |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> 5 to 6 weeks | 22.1 % |
| 4. <input type="checkbox"/> 7 to 8 weeks | 12.2 % |
| 5. <input type="checkbox"/> 9 to 10 weeks | 5.5 % |
| 6. <input type="checkbox"/> 11 weeks or longer | 14.3 % |
| - - - - - | |
| 7. <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure/No basis to judge | 19.0 % |

13. Were you personally interviewed? *(Check one.)*

N = 199,761

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | 73.8 % |
| 2. <input type="checkbox"/> No | 25.0 % |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure/Don't remember | 1.2 % |

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14. When considering your personal experience with the federal hiring process, how much difficulty, if any, did you have with the following activities? *(Check one box in each row.)*

Activities	Not sure/ No basis to judge (1)	Little or no difficulty (2)	Some difficulty (3)	A moderat e amount of difficulty (4)	Great difficulty (5)	Very great difficulty (6)
a. Obtaining application materials N = 200,577	2.6 %	83.5 %	6.3 %	5.1 %	1.7 %	0.8 %
b. Obtaining information on federal employment N = 200,286	4.2 %	62.2 %	14.5 %	6.0 %	8.6 %	4.5 %
c. Understanding how positions are filled among various agencies N = 200,442	11.6 %	33.6 %	22.5 %	15.0 %	10.0 %	7.4 %
d. Knowing where to submit application form N = 200,159	1.9 %	75.7 %	10.5 %	5.5 %	4.1 %	2.3 %
e. Knowing whom to talk to about the vacancy N = 199,314	3.8 %	54.8 %	17.9 %	11.3 %	8.7 %	3.4 %
f. Amount of paperwork required N = 200,636	2.2 %	42.9 %	23.4 %	17.2 %	9.9 %	4.4 %
g. Time required to fill out application forms N = 200,528	1.6 %	46.5 %	21.6 %	16.5 %	8.6 %	5.1 %
h. Time required to wait until job offer is made N = 200,462	8.0 %	39.3 %	25.1 %	14.9 %	6.8 %	5.9 %
i. Knowing the status of my application N = 199,199	8.2 %	37.9 %	20.4 %	18.2 %	8.4 %	7.0 %
j. Knowing how to write applications (e.g., SF-171) to meet specific job requirements N = 200,223	5.1 %	41.3 %	24.7 %	15.4 %	7.5 %	6.1 %
k. Other activities - Please specify: _____ N = 21,802	39.7 %	19.5 %	13.3 %	11.7 %	1.6 %	14.1 %
l. _____ N = 5,253	--	--	1.7 %	1.8 %	70.0 %	26.6 %

15. If you answered "Very great difficulty" or "Great difficulty" for any of the activities listed in question 14, please indicate your reasons below.

N = 65,765

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16. Based on your recent hiring experience, do you agree or disagree that the federal hiring process has the following characteristics? *(Check one box in each row.)*

The Federal Hiring System is:	Not sure/ No basis to judge (1)	Strongly agree (2)	Generally agree (3)	No opinion either way (4)	Generally disagree (5)	Strongly disagree (6)
a. Open to all N = 199,321	15.0 %	28.7 %	30.9 %	11.6 %	7.4 %	6.4 %
b. Free of discrimination N = 200,066	10.0 %	28.2 %	30.3 %	18.0 %	6.5 %	6.9 %
c. Based on objective ratings of job-related factors N = 192,619	10.1 %	24.3 %	34.9 %	13.5 %	12.6 %	4.6 %
d. Free of personal or political favoritism N = 196,455	10.3 %	21.4 %	24.0 %	20.5 %	16.5 %	7.3 %
e. Timely N = 200,271	7.0 %	19.4 %	34.3 %	13.9 %	17.9 %	7.5 %
f. Easy to understand N = 199,693	5.0 %	19.2 %	36.7 %	16.8 %	15.3 %	7.0 %
g. Other (Please specify: N = 4984 _____)	64.8 %	22.8 %	--	3.6 %	5.5 %	3.4 %

17. If you answered "Generally disagree" or "Strongly disagree" in question 16, please indicate your reasons below.

N = 77,947

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18. Have you applied for a comparable position(s) in another organization(s) within the past two years? If yes, would you say that your other experience(s) were easier, about the same, or more difficult than your application/hiring experiences for your current position? (Check "Yes" or "No" for each hiring process. For each "Yes" compare the experience.)

	Did you apply?		If yes, the other application/hiring experience was:			
	Yes (1)	No (2)	Easier than that for my current position (1)	About the same as that for my current position (2)	More difficult than that for my current position (3)	Unable to judge (4)
Other organizations						
a. Another federal agency N = 186,532	18.8 %	81.2 %	18.2 %	34.1 %	34.2 %	13.5 %
b. A private sector organization N = 186,409	35.8 %	64.2 %	59.4 %	23.0 %	8.5 %	9.2 %
c. A state government organization N = 184,118	18.5 %	81.5 %	39.8 %	37.4 %	13.0 %	9.7 %
d. A local government organization N = 175,582	8.6 %	91.4 %	30.9 %	29.3 %	20.1 %	19.7 %
e. A nonprofit organization N = 183,023	6.4 %	93.6 %	22.9 %	37.6 %	8.9 %	30.7 %
f. College or University N = 179,414	11.2 %	88.8 %	45.4 %	28.5 %	4.3 %	21.7 %
g. Other (Please specify: _____ N = 13,915	32.8 %	67.2 %	37.6 %	1.5 %	12.0 %	48.8 %

19. If you indicated that the hiring process for the comparable positions was easier or more difficult in question 18, please explain.

N = 53,278

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20. To what extent, if at all, did the following people assist you in the application/hiring process for your current position? If yes, how useful was that assistance? (Check "Yes" or "No" for each individual. For each "Yes" indicate the usefulness of the assistance.)

Person	Did person offer assistance?		If yes, how useful was that assistance?			
	Yes (1)	No (2)	Very useful (1)	Somewhat useful (2)	Of little or no use (3)	Unsure/ No basis to judge (4)
a. Family member or friend N = 193,702	37.6 %	62.4 %	77.1 %	19.5 %	3.0 %	0.4 %
b. OPM official N = 180,820	14.0 %	86.0 %	61.7 %	28.0 %	4.5 %	5.8 %
c. Agency official N = 185,273	38.1 %	61.9 %	59.7 %	31.1 %	6.0 %	3.2 %
d. Other (Please specify: _____ N = 17,450	79.1 %	20.9 %	61.4 %	22.3 %	0.9 %	15.4 %

21. If you have any additional comments on the federal hiring process or on this survey, please provide them in the space below.

Please include - what went well with the process, what did not go well, and any solutions you may have for improving the process.

N = 78,635

Thank you for your help.
Please return your completed questionnaire in the enclosed pre-addressed envelope.

Questionnaire Survey Methodology

The objective of our questionnaires was to obtain the perceptions of key people who work with the federal hiring process on procedures that are working, those that are not, and how the process can be improved. By measuring their satisfaction with various aspects of the federal hiring process, we hoped to develop quantitative data that Congress and agencies can use to make federal hiring procedures more consistent with customers' needs.

Sampling and Survey Procedures

We mailed questionnaires to three categories of individuals: (1) agency personnelists, (2) agency selecting officials, and (3) employees recently hired from outside the government. Individuals in these categories of customers were represented by interrelated, variable-probability samples. In addition we surveyed managers of OPM service centers to determine their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the hiring process. There were 31 OPM service centers at the time of our study, and the manager of each center was sent a questionnaire.

Because we were interested in respondents' perceptions of specific types of hiring mechanisms, we stratified the different hiring mechanisms into five broad categories: (1) Mechanisms that are essentially noncompetitive, such as the outstanding scholar program; (2) mechanisms where OPM rates and ranks applicants; (3) mechanisms where agencies rate and rank applicants under delegated agreements with OPM; (4) mechanisms used to hire temporary employees; (5) and excepted service mechanisms.

Personnel offices was the initial sampling unit for the questionnaires sent to personnelists, selecting officials, and recent hires. From a universe of 1,621 personnel offices, we drew a random sample of 221 personnel offices with probabilities proportionate to the numbers of new hiring actions made in fiscal year 1992. Overseas offices and those that had no new hires in fiscal year 1992 were excluded from our review. We then selected a random sample of 2,140 employees hired during fiscal year 1992 through those 221 offices. Probabilities of selection were varied to provide approximately equal numbers of sample selections for the five strata. Our goal was to obtain estimates of percentages for all three populations with 95-percent confidence intervals of ± 10 percent.

The names of the 2,140 new hires and the identity of the personnel offices that hired them were obtained through OPM's Central Personnel Data File (CPDF). The file includes employment information on federal workers in most agencies, the major exclusions being members and employees of

Congress, the Judicial Branch, the United States Postal Service, and intelligence agencies. We did not independently verify the information in the file.

Because the CPDF lacked information on employees' work addresses and the selecting officials who hired them, we depended on personnel offices to provide us with that information on recent hires. If the personnel office did not respond or gave us incomplete or inaccurate information, we were unable to survey the recent hires and selecting officials.

Specific questionnaires were developed for each respondent group. Selecting officials were mailed an additional questionnaire eliciting information on whether they were satisfied with the processes used to select specific candidates whom we had identified.

We pretested the questionnaires with 38 individuals before mailing. These pretests included members of each respondent group, and took place in Washington, D.C., Denver, Co., Dallas, Tx., and Philadelphia, Pa. Pretests helped to ensure that the questions could be interpreted correctly by the different individuals in our survey.

Questionnaires were mailed to the 31 OPM service center managers in March 1993. Telephone and in-person interviews were later held with a random selection of 16 service center managers to elaborate on their responses. We mailed questionnaires and forms to obtain identifying information on recent hires and selecting officials to personnelists in late April 1993. Questionnaires to recent hires and selecting officials were mailed June through August, 1993.

A follow-up mailing to non-respondents in each respondent group was made several weeks after the first mailing. We continued to accept responses until October 1, 1993. Table III.1 summarizes the disposition of our questionnaires.

**Appendix VII
Questionnaire Survey Methodology**

Table III.1: Analysis of Questionnaire Returns

Category	Respondent group				
	OPM service center managers	Agency personnelists	Selecting officials (perceptions of specific hiring actions)	Selecting officials (perceptions of overall hiring process)	Recent hires
Total sampled	Not applicable	221	1,992 ^a	Unknown ^b	2,140
Stage I: Identification of sample members					
Individual no longer present	0	0	166	0	665
Personnel office did not respond or provided inadequate identifying information	Not applicable	Not applicable	627	1	397
Individuals identified and eligible for questionnaire mailout	31	221	1,199	907 ^c	1,078
Stage II: Mailout of questionnaires					
Unable to locate individual ^d	0	0	21	98	64
No usable response ^e	0	29	427	158	235
Total usable responses	31	192	751	651	779
Response Rates					
Percentage of original probability sample ^f	100%	87%	38%	Unknown	36%
Percentage of identified sample ^g	100%	87%	63%	72%	72%
Percentage of deliverable questionnaires ^h	100%	87%	64%	73%	77%

(Table notes on next page)

^aSo that selecting officials could evaluate the hiring process for specific recent hires, we drew a subsample of 1,992 from the original sample of 2,140 recent hires. This random subsample was drawn to reduce the response burden on selecting officials who were responsible for making more than 10 new appointments. Thus, if a selecting official was responsible for more than 10 hiring actions, we randomly selected 10 on which to obtain his or her perceptions.

^bThe total number of selecting officials who selected the 2,140 recent hires in our sample is unknown because they often selected more than one individual. Since the personnelists who provided us with the names and addresses of selecting officials were not asked to do so if the person was no longer present at their agency, the population of selecting officials could not be determined.

^cThese 907 selecting officials selected 1,542 new hires or 72 percent of our sample of 2,140 new hires.

^dThis broad category includes, for example, questionnaires that were returned by the Postal Service, as well as individuals who were unable to receive a questionnaire because they were no longer employed at that office.

^eIncludes those questionnaires that could not be part of our database because individuals returned their questionnaires late, refused to participate, were not responsible for a particular hiring action, and miscellaneous other reasons.

^fThis is the number of usable responses as a percentage of the total sampled.

^gThis is the number of usable responses as a percentage of the individuals identified and eligible for questionnaire mailout.

^hThis is the number of usable responses as a percentage of the identified sample less those where we were unable to locate sample members.

Analysis of Data

We reviewed and edited the completed questionnaires and made consistency checks on the data. We did not test the validity of respondents' answers or the comments they made.

As noted earlier, with the exception of the questionnaire sent to OPM service center managers, our study used random sampling. As a result, the data obtained are subject to some uncertainty or sampling error. The sampling error consists of two parts: confidence levels and ranges. The confidence level indicates the degree of confidence that can be placed in the estimates derived from the sample. The confidence interval is the upper and lower limits between which the actual estimates may be found. Our samples were designed to achieve a sampling error no greater than +10 percent at the 95-percent confidence level. In this way, if all members of the various respondent groups had been surveyed, the chances are 95 out of 100 that the results obtained would not differ from our sample estimates by more than 10 percent.

Despite the generally high response rates of those who received questionnaires, we were unable to obtain information from more than 60 percent of the target samples of recent hires and from selecting officials who provided perceptions of the hiring process for specific individuals. This low response rate is largely the result of agency personnel offices providing incomplete or no identifying data on members of our sample. This made it impossible to contact recent hires and selecting officials. Because many of the recent hires not contacted were hired as temporary employees, our findings may not be representative of this type of hiring mechanism.

Because of sampling variability, the percentages reported for certain questionnaire items have a sampling error of greater than ± 10 percent at the 95 percent confidence interval. These include personnelists' perceptions of specific hiring mechanisms when less than 50 personnelists reported using a particular mechanism; and new hires' perception that applying for a private sector position was easier than applying for a federal position (± 11 percent).

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