FEDERAL HIRING

OPM Needs to Improve Management and Oversight of Hiring Authorities

What GAO Found

A hiring authority is the law, executive order, or regulation that allows an agency to hire a person into the federal civil service. Of the 105 hiring authorities used in fiscal year 2014, agencies relied on 20 for 91 percent of the 196,226 new appointments made that year. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) officials said they do not know if agencies rely on a small number of authorities because agencies are unfamiliar with other authorities, or if they have found other authorities to be less effective. The competitive examining hiring authority, generally seen as the traditional method for federal hiring, was the single most used authority in fiscal year 2014, but accounted for less than 25 percent of all new appointments.

Agencies Relied on 20 Hiring Authorities for Nearly All New Hires in Fiscal Year 2014

While OPM—the agency responsible for overseeing the delegated hiring authority and managing federal civilian personnel data—tracks data on agency time-to-hire, manager and applicant survey results, and compliance audits to assess the hiring process, this information is not used by OPM or agencies to analyze the effectiveness of hiring authorities. As a result, OPM and agencies do not know if authorities are meeting their intended purposes. By analyzing hiring authorities, OPM and agencies could identify improvements that could be used to refine authorities, expand access to specific authorities found to be highly efficient and effective, and eliminate those found to be less effective.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Director of OPM, working with agencies, strengthen hiring efforts by (1) analyzing the extent to which federal hiring authorities are meeting agencies’ needs; (2) using this information to explore opportunities to refine, eliminate, or expand authorities as needed, and (3) sustain the Hiring Excellence Campaign’s efforts to improve agency hiring and leverage prior initiatives, as appropriate. OPM generally concurred with these recommendations.

View GAO-16-521. For more information, contact Robert Goldenkoff at (202) 512-2757 or goldenkoffr@gao.gov.