GAO Highlights

USAJOBS WEBSITE

OPM Has Taken Actions to Assess and Enhance the User Experience

Why GAO Did This Study

The USAJOBS website, which is managed by OPM, is the entry point to the federal hiring process for most agencies. It facilitates hiring of new employees as well as the movement of talent across government through merit-based promotions and transfers. OPM uses USAJOBS to help achieve the agency's mission to recruit and retain a world-class government workforce. OPM is responsible for ensuring the usability of USAJOBS and collecting feedback on the user experience. Hiring agencies are responsible for the content of job opportunity announcements.

Report language accompanying the Financial Services and General Government Appropriations Bill, 2020, and the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2020 included provisions for GAO to review the user experience on USAJOBS. This report examines (1) the extent to which OPM assesses the user experience with USAJOBS and the results of OPM's assessments; and (2) actions OPM has taken to improve the user experience with USAJOBS.

GAO reviewed OPM data and documentation, interviewed OPM officials, and compared OPM's assessments of user experience to OMB guidance for federal service providers and selected guidance from Digital.gov on performance measures for federal websites.

What GAO Found

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) uses a variety of sources to assess the user experience with USAJOBS, the central website for posting federal job openings. GAO found that OPM's assessments generally track key measures in accordance with selected government-wide guidance. Specifically, OPM collects data on most of the website performance measures recommended by selected guidance from Digital.gov, including the number of times pages were viewed, the percentage of users who use the USAJOBS search box, and overall customer experience. Additionally, consistent with guidance from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), OPM surveys USAJOBS users about their experiences with the site. OPM also assesses user experience through usability testing, focus groups, and analysis of data on questions submitted to the USAJOBS help desk. Through these assessments, OPM found variations in user experience across the job search and application process, including variations in how people find job announcements and how long it takes them to complete job applications.

Since the agency's redesign of USAJOBS in 2016, OPM has taken a number of actions in an effort to address feedback from these assessments and improve the USAJOBS user experience. For example, in 2017, OPM created a set of categories, called Hiring Paths, that describe who is eligible to apply for specific federal jobs and guide job seekers to positions for which they are eligible.

Other OPM actions taken from 2016 to 2020 include

- implementing a new process for logging in to the system to improve website security;
- updating job search filters and adding a keyword autocomplete function, which suggests search terms as a job seeker types in the search box;
- revising its job announcement template for hiring agencies to help eliminate duplicative language, increase clarity, and avoid jargon;
- adding guidance to help job seekers complete federal applications and understand federal hiring authorities; and
- highlighting jobs related to COVID-19 response.

OPM continues to update and refine these efforts. OPM also expects to take a number of additional actions intended to help enhance the USAJOBS website. For example, according to OPM officials, in early fiscal year 2021 they expect to add a "job status" indicator for each job announcement posted on USAJOBS. The job status indicator would provide information such as the number of applicants and when the job has been filled. According to OPM, this would improve transparency and accountability and also provide applicants with updates at each stage of the hiring process.

GAO provided a draft of this report to OPM for review and comment. OPM stated that it did not have comments.

_____ **United States Government Accountability Office**