

Hiring Flexibilities

Virtual Conference for Supervisors

Recorded March 8, 2017

Good morning everyone. Welcome into the classroom for the Hiring Authorities session. The login information and phone bridges are on the bottom of the screen right now. We will be recording this session. We ask that when you see the chat pod on the first screen of the presentation that you please say hello to us. AdobeConnect allows learners to be named in the classroom the entire time the classroom is open, so sometimes folks sign in and jump back and forth from one classroom to another. So, a hello in the chat box gives us an accurate recording of who is in the class today. Lisa Matarazzo will be our moderator again in this classroom making sure things are working on the back end. Our presenter for our session on Hiring Authorities is Angela Hargrove. She is the Assistant Director for Work for Policy and Special Initiatives. Angela is located in Washington, DC. So Angela and Lisa, I am turning the platform over to you.

Thank you, Jo. And good morning, everyone, and welcome. Thank you for attending this training session on Hiring Authorities. I know the slides as hiring flexibilities. I will use those terms interchangeably today.

Again, just a quick reminder, please put your phone on mute to make sure we alleviate any background noise. We have built in a couple of breaks for questions and we will ask that you hold them until then. As Jo mentioned, you can use the chat box to raise any questions and then again, Jo and Lisa will be monitoring those as we go along. So again, I would like to welcome you this morning and we will go ahead and get started.

So, as we go through this presentation today, I am hopeful that each of you will have a number of takeaways from this session, and I believe that one of the most important ones is that the hiring process is a collaborative effort. Hiring is a partnership between the hiring manager, the HR specialist, and in some cases, the EEO specialist. Everyone has a role in the responsibilities that must be carried out to ensure that the best candidate is selected, and that the hiring process is in compliance with law, rules, and regulations.

The key to any successful hire is communication. Whether the communication is virtual, on the phone, or in person, communication is essential. It could lead to better [Indiscernible] as a result, better hires, decreased expenses, and less time to fill.

If you use good communication, it can be a win-win for everyone. Managers must focus their needs before they arise and asked to be more involved in the recruitment activity that includes such things as job analysis, question assessment development, determining what the interview techniques will be, and whether or not any potential panel members might be used

before the vacancy announcement closes. Your HR specialist will need to partner with your managers to effectively communicate the critical skills, experiences and abilities that are required for successful performance on the job. By working together and through communication, a hiring manager can go into the hiring process more informed about the areas of underrepresentation in their organizations, the essential competencies necessary to address the workload, and a more keen awareness of the best message available to get the right person in the right job and at the right time.

So, our areas of focus for today's session will be to define the various hiring authorities or flexibilities, to provide some clarity on how the flexibilities are used and who is eligible. We will also talk some about the advantages or benefits to using these hiring flexibilities, and then we will share with you a number of tools and resources that you can use in the future.

I realize that when you think about hiring, it can generate a number of questions, but because of the limited time we have today, I am going to ask that we try to stay within the parameters of the hiring flexibilities that I will be mentioning today. You can always reach out to your [Indiscernible] when you have questions that pertain to other aspects of the hiring process that we might not touch on today.

So in most cases, I would imagine that when you look to fill a vacant position, you generally work with your servicing HR specialist to fill the position by advertising it via delegated examining, and that is where you might be looking to reach candidates that are outside the federal government or you might consider announcing your position via merit promotions, and that is where you are looking to reach candidates who have status or who are currently federal employees.

In lots of cases, using these methods could take an extremely long time. As I mentioned earlier, it requires you to perform a job analysis, develop assessment questions. You might even consider performing outreach activities that would expand the size of your applicant pool. You would wait and possibly rank applications using a panel of subject matter experts. You would then proceed to interview those candidates in the wait for background investigations. So, to fill a job through these normal processes could take an extremely long time.

And so we have a quick poll question. I am curious as to how long it took to fill one of your most recent vacant positions, and there is a box that you can check 1-3 months, 3-6 months, 6-9 months, 9-12 months, or are there any cases where it took more than 12 months to fill a vacancy?

Okay. So it seems as if, for the most part, most of you are ensuring that it takes anywhere from 6-9 months, and that is a pretty significant time, considering in most cases you are going to have to pull folks from other work to help assist you in accomplishing the work of the vacant position. So, it's really important to try to get positions filled as quickly as possible. I know it can be very challenging at times. So, as we talk about hiring flexibilities, a good many

of these don't require you to issue a vacancy announcement. So, when you think about it from that perspective, it should take not nearly as long to get a position filled by using some of these flexibilities.

There are some tools that I will be sharing today that hopefully will shorten the length of time that it takes to fill in the vacancies that you might have in the future.

Hiring Flexibilities serves as a means to bring on new employees through a noncompetitive process. The noncompetitive process allows hiring managers to hire candidates without having to go through the full application process. In most cases, jobs are open to select candidates, as opposed to the general public, or those who have been federal employees for at least the last three years. Hiring flexibilities exist to make the filling of a vacant position a lot more timely and less cumbersome.

So when is it appropriate to use the Hiring Flexibilities? This can be determined by looking at the needs that you are trying to address as you fill your vacant session. So, here are a few questions that should be considered when you are trying to determine if a hiring flexibility is an option you should pursue.

As an example, we'll be hiring a student into a developmental position meet your needs. Do you have the time to train someone up, or do they need to hit the ground running? As an example, in one of the offices here in our organization, we have one specific office where everyone is currently retirement eligible, with the exception of one person, and so we are looking at a possible retirement of about 80% in the next year or year and a half. So, during this time, we have been giving some thought to whether or not a Pathways student would be a good thing to bring in to kind of shadow a more senior person, just so that we can have some folks ready to kind of hit the ground running, if you will, when those folks to decide to retire.

Another question you might consider is can you hire an individual with special needs? How might a hire increase the diversity in your park or program offices?

Earlier on, I talked about groups of underrepresentation. If you are concerned about that and are looking to add some diversity to your staff, hiring a person with special needs might be something you wish to consider. Another consideration is are you looking to hire someone with federal government experience, or are you looking to hire someone who is new to the government? Your servicing HR specialist can assist you with determining whether one of the flexibilities we will be talking about can help you meet your hiring goals. >>

So, the first flexibility or authority we are going to talk about today are those authorities associated with hiring veterans. And so, as you can see, there are three authorities or flexibilities that exist to help government agencies attract veterans to their organizations. And so we are going to pause here for another question and we are going to ask that you raise your hand.

You can see it on the site or if you want to type yes in the chat box the question.

So I am curious as to whether or not any of you have used these veterans hiring authorities to bring on a new employee in the last year or so? We are getting good feedback about having used the veterans recruitment authority. It doesn't seem to be very cumbersome, so that is great.

So some of you do seem to be familiar with some of these authorities. So, we'll spend a couple of moments talking about each of these. I would also like to add that there is another training opportunity specifically geared towards hiring veterans, and Lisa will share with you when those take place.

There is one this afternoon with [Indiscernible] at the veterans authority at 1:30 Eastern, and there is another one on Friday at 10 AM Eastern with Tyler.

Thanks, Lisa. So I just want to talk briefly about the veterans recruitment authority.

You can use this authority to appoint veterans to positions up to the GS 11 level without further competition, and so upon satisfactory completion of a two-year appointment, veterans can be converted noncompetitive way to a career conditional appointment. So, all veterans that receive an honorable discharge, they may be eligible under this authority.

As a few examples, I want to focus on disabled veterans, veterans who served on active duty in the arms forces during a war or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge was authorized, and a veteran who participated in a United States military operation, for which an armed forces service medal was awarded. You can also hire recently separated veterans under this authority. We can use the CRA to fill permanent, temporary or term positions. It should be noted, however, that the intent of these flexibilities is to provide veterans with opportunities for permanent, full-time employment. Again, while there is nothing that prohibits you from bringing a veteran into a temporary or term position, I just want you to keep in mind that when you use a noncompetitive hiring authority, the real intent is to create permanent employment for individuals who meet the criteria for these types of appointments.

So, we are going to talk a little bit about the Veterans Employment Opportunity Act, and this is a competitive service appointing authority that can be used with filling permanent positions. I recognize this is a little different from the other authorities that we will be discussing today, but I wanted to highlight it because it does serve as another tool that you can use to hire a veteran.

Unlike the VRA, veterans to have to apply to announcements that are open to status candidates or current competitive service employees.

A VEOA eligible person must still rate and rank among the best qualified when compared to current employee applicants in order to be considered for appointment. Current or former federal employees meeting the EO a eligibility can apply; however, current employees applying under are subject to time and greater restrictions, just like any other general grade employees.

Finally, we can also employ veterans of the compensable [Indiscernible] of 30% or more with the competition. All eligible candidates may be appointed to any position for which they are qualified at any occupational grade level. The initial appointment is time-limited, and then similar to what I mentioned in the Veterans Recruitment Authority, these veterans may also be noncompetitively converted to permanent status at any time during that time-limited appointment.

The Schedule A authorities for individuals with disabilities, and it is also a noncompetitive hiring authority that agencies can use to appoint eligible individuals who have a severe physical, psychological or intellectual disability. Some of these disabilities might include such things as blindness, paralysis, epilepsy. There are a variety of disabilities that allow individuals to be hired under this authority.

Again, agencies can use this authority to appoint at any grade level and for any job, be it temporary, term, or permanent, but it is designed to allow people to be appointed for any position that they are found qualified for.

After completing two years of satisfactory service in the term of permanent accepted employment, this individual may be noncompetitively converted to a permanent career or career conditional appointment. Hiring a Schedule A individual requires the public notice and therefore should reduce the amount of time to fill the position. One of the tools that OPM has established to assist agencies in obtaining information about people with disabilities who are interested in federal employment, there is a database that OPM has established that houses resumes and information for people who have a disability, and again, who are interested in federal employment. Those areas include such occupational series that cover accounting, budget analysis, contracting, finance, human resources, information technology, administrative support and a variety of other clerical type positions throughout the United States. A database of resumes is available to hiring managers and HR. So, if you were interested in pursuing this, you would work with your HR specialist to gain access to the database.

Your SHRO should be your point of contact to give you information that is designed to put that about upcoming chapters designed to place candidates with disabilities into positions which they qualify.

A question -- after the two years, do you have to convert them or is it optional?

It is optional, but if they have been performing successfully, again, the intent of the authority is to provide that veteran with a career conditional appointment. Each year, the EEOC comes to us and asks us what the status is of any veterans or Schedule A appointees that we have brought on or have been here for two years. If they found that we have not converted them, they have asked us that we provide justification as to why they have not been converted.

I have noticed recently, because we just went through this, a lot of folks just remain in that initial appointment because the manager perhaps is not aware that they are eligible for conversion, and it is just an oversight. So recently, we had about 12 folks throughout the service that were on Schedule A appointments to have not been converted. So, when we reached out to the field and made them aware of this, all of them, I believe, were converted. So, this case was just an oversight. And again, while it is not mandatory, the intent of the authority is to allow for conversion to permanent status, so unless there is a reason for some reason that maybe, perhaps, they are not performing successfully, we encourage folks to convert them, because that is something they are eligible for after having served that two-year trial service.

So we have a little bit in here where we will take questions if you have any.

You can un-mute your phone or you can put it in the chat box if you have any questions.

We see someone typing, so we think we have a question coming in. So, the question is, is Schedule A for veterans? A Schedule A appointment can allow you to hire a veteran, because you can have a veteran that is disabled. At the same time -- and I will just go back to the slide -- so you can hire a veteran that is 30% or more disabled. You can use the authority for that, or you can use the Schedule A authority. Either is fine, but you want to focus on the authority that will take the less amount of time to get the procedure and does not require any competition. Angela, this is Jo. Sometimes veterans don't have 30% disability; they may have a 10% or 20% disability. So, we would be able to use Schedule A in that case?

Right. Correct. Thanks for pointing that out and making that a little more clear, Jo. Awesome.

Are there any other questions out there right now? And just as a reminder, your HR specialists within your SHRO, and a lot of cases, you have a specific person that has a greater amount of expertise around some of these authorities. We will be making this presentation and the slides available to you later, and again, you will have that as a reference as I mentioned early on. We have resources to share with you at the end as well.

Okay. So, we are going to move on to another -- Hiring Flexibilities or authority, and that is Pathways. I am hopeful that many of you have used this before. This authority is for students and recent graduates. Now, Pathways was formerly known as the STEP and SCEP program, and those again were authorities to move students and recent graduates into federal service.

This program is designed to provide students, as well as a wide variety of educational institutions that range from high school to graduate-level, with opportunities to work in agencies and explore federal careers while still in school and while getting paid for the work they perform.

So, the Pathways program consists of three major components. The first is the internship program. What this does is it targets students that are enrolled in a wide variety of educational institutions that range from high school to graduate-level. This includes four-year colleges and universities, community colleges, junior colleges, and it also includes vocational and training schools.

The internship program offers agencies a flexibility to hire students on a short-term basis, not to exceed a year or for longer periods of time necessary for the student to complete their education. So many, many, many years ago, I, myself, was on one of these appointments. I took a summer job with the Department of Labor under what used to be the STEP program, so, I know that we make great use of Pathways students to fill short-term needs.

The Recent Graduates program is a brand-new developmental program that is used to help agencies that are recruiting from recent graduates of trade and vocational schools. In about with Pathways, that again is more of a developmental program.

And then finally, the Presidential Management Fellows program. That has been around for a very long time, more than 30 years. It is considered one of the more premier leadership development programs for college students with advanced degrees. The program focuses on developing a cadre of potential government leaders, and generally, this is a program that is managed by OPM themselves. Once a year, there is an open window period where OPM reaches out to federal agencies to ask if there are any folks or any agencies that are interested in bringing on a Presidential Management Fellow. In order to get these folks, we pay OPM anywhere from \$5000 In order to get these folks, we pay OPM anywhere from \$5000-\$7000 to bring them on, but I must say, in my career, I have worked with quite a few of these folks, and they are very bright individuals who have a great amount of educational knowledge and experience that have been a great asset to many of the offices that I have worked in.

A few key things to remember about what is different from what the STEP and SCEP program used to be. Public notice is required and we must consider veterans preference when we are looking to fill a job through a Pathways authority. And so, I want to take a moment to share with you a Pathways database, but I want to ask one quick question. The database is something that was set up a couple of years ago that is accessible through the employee center. I am just curious -- basically what it does is house resumes of employees who are currently with the Park Service. So I am wondering, how many of you are aware of the Pathways database or whether or not you used it [Indiscernible]?

Just a reminder, you can raise your hand using the participant icon on the top menu bar. Use the drop-down menu and put your hand up.

We have a couple of folks there.

We are going to take you to the database.

I don't know if you saw the comment from Jo about the President Management Fellows that concurred that they can be really useful.

So, hopefully you guys can see the Pathways portal, and this is the first page to the database. This just provides some general information to Pathways students, but what we are going to do is we're going to take a moment to go into the database. So, we are going to talk about how this site is used, and hopefully you guys can actually see some of the information or data that is here.

So a Pathways employees who are coming up on the window of eligibility to convert it to a term or permanent position -- they complete a form that allows them to include the background information, location preferences and type of position they are interested in. So if you look here -- and we're just going to slide over -- you will see contact information for Pathways students. It will share with you -- the database shows their current position, but it also goes over and shows the academic program that they are in, their field of study, and the types of positions that they are interested in.

In addition to that, it also shows, as I mentioned, the locations that they are interested in working at, the types of positions they are interested in, and any additional comments that they would like you to consider. It also shows the contact information for their current supervisor, so that in the event you are interested in picking up one of these folks, you can reach out to their current supervisor to obtain a reference check. So basically, the way the system works is the form that the Pathways student fills out allows them to upload a resume to this database, and then every Parks Service supervisor and specialist has access to this. As a supervisor, you can access this at any time using the filter options to look for candidates who possess the desired skill set and the background that you might be looking for to fill a position in your organization.

Pathways program participants may only edit their own profiles, and they may not access the database themselves.

So, perhaps later if you take a moment to try to gain access to the database. If you do not have access, because there have been some folks who have been on these webinars that did not have access, if you send me an email, I can ensure you that you are provided access.

Again, this is a really useful tool, especially for current Hiring Flexibilities -- could hire employees who are in the current window of eligibility. They've already competed for the position and now they have the opportunity for the noncompetitive conversion, if you will. So, there are folks that might not be able to be converted in their current jobs, but if there is an

opportunity for them to be converted somewhere else, this database is really helpful to identify those students.

Just a bit of caution before any offer is made: so, for example, you go in and find someone that you are interested in, you reach out to them and do a reference check. What I would encourage you to do is before any offer is made, contact your SHRO to verify the candidate's hiring eligibility. Unfortunately, we all don't always have enough resources to go in and update this as often as we would like. So, just to ensure that the Pathways student's eligibility is still current, again, I would encourage you to reach out to your SHRO so they can verify that eligibility. >> So we are going to leave the database and go back to our presentation. >>

And the next authority that we are going to talk about is one that is very unique and is exclusive to DOI bureaus. So, we will be moving on to the DHA or Direct Hiring Authority for the Resource Assistant Internship Program. So, there's this possibility that was passed into legislation back in 2013, and it is derived from an internship development program in the WASO Comptroller Office.

This flexibility can be used to appoint a former resource assistant who has completed a rigorous undergraduate or graduate summer internship within a land management agency, and who has successfully fulfilled the requirement of that internship program and who has also subsequently earned an undergraduate or graduate degree. A qualified internship program must include the following -- a clearly defined deliverable or work product with clear expectations and outcomes, a minimum of 11 weeks of full-time work, a focus on critical thinking and real-world problem-solving. During the internship, the candidate must bring findings to key decision-makers and the supervisor must address certification of high performance during the internship.

Internship programs may be established in any one or more of the following career fields: Park, Refuge or Monument management and administration; natural resources management; environmental policy and management; historical or cultural management; business management and administration; public policy; administration and management; or tourism and hospitality services and resource protection.

So, these qualifying internships should include projects that require a focus on specific candidate skills and qualifications. The project should be structured and have a clear path to support candidates and opportunities for management and supervisors.

The internship should allow candidates to operate with a high degree of autonomy where initiative and innovation are encouraged. The project should have a defined deliverable, where clear goals are communicated about the desired outcomes or results for the project. So, as an example, some of the projects that I am aware of that these folks have worked on, again, [Indiscernible] Jason Gibson's office in the comptroller area, and they go out to parks and work on developing a strategic plan or business plan for a park. So, that is a really kind of high-level project that allows them to demonstrate skills of initiative and innovation, and

again, that requires a specific outcome. And so once they have completed that project, they have a window by which they can be converted to a noncompetitive appointment, and they can be converted anytime -- they have within a two-year window under which they can have completed their degree. >> And basically, what happens is the internship is established with the designator partner organization who is responsible for funding the salary while they are working on the project. Once they are converted, of course, they actually become a federal government employee with a land management agency. Some important factors to remember: the candidates may be appointed directly without competition. So that certainly decreases the amount of time that it would take to bring someone on board.

And again, Jason Gibson manages the internship program and there have been a number of people that have come through his office that are available to be picked up. So, another source there that doesn't require competition, and it doesn't require the veterans preference to be considered. And from my experience it with the Park Service in HR, we have hired at least one who turned out to be a really stellar candidate, had lots of initiative, was a real go-getter, so I don't think you can go wrong using this particular hiring authority to bring on an experienced young person.

We are going to move on to the [Indiscernible] authority. And again, this is another hiring flexibility that was established to provide work and educational opportunities for young men and women in the areas of natural and cultural resource conservation and/or development. It provides noncompetitive hiring status to former POC members who have served a minimum of 640 hours, a satisfactory service on an appropriate conservation project that included at least 120 hours through the PLC. And of course, they must meet any OPM qualification standards for the position they are looking to be considered for.

Former PLC members must submit their PLC participant work hours, verification forms and certificate of eligibility from his or her last supervisor to a Park Service youth program office coordinator certification and signature. It is really important that there be documentation that reflects the number of hours the PLC member has completed, because that is one of the qualifications. >> A former PLC member who wishes to use this noncompetitive hiring authority must apply to a specific merit promotion vacancy announcement. A couple of things have recently changed, effective December 16 of last year, so you will see on the slide that these work and educational opportunities are available for folks from 16-25. That has recently changed and that age limit has been raised from 16 to now 30 years of age.

In the past, these folks had an eligibility window of 120 days to be converted, and that has been expanded now to two years. So they are broadening the, I guess, opportunities and eligibilities for these folks to be considered and to obtain a permanent employment through the use of this hiring authority.

We are going to go through one last hiring flexibility that is geared towards former Peace Corps members or AmeriCorp Vista members. The Peace Corps volunteers can be

[Indiscernible] noncompetitive eligibility for 12 months of [Indiscernible] upon completion of their service.

You are eligible to take on a volunteer without having to go through the [Indiscernible] the competitive hiring process. The Peace Corps offers a variety of career fairs that are held in major cities throughout the year and then serves as an avenue that you can consider in trying to attract a former volunteer. If you are unable to attend the scheduled career fair, you can work with your SHRO and the Peace Corps to host your own event, all free of charge. The Peace Corps will actually find a career fair if you reach out to them and work through your HR specialist.

Volunteers In Service To America, or VISTA, is another program that allows for noncompetitive eligibility from folks who have served in this type of area. Again, they are not required to compete with the general public for a position, and the eligibility for this type of appointment begins when they have completed their one-year of time that they served with the AmeriCorp. With the noncompetitive eligibility, potential applicants or employees [Indiscernible] to federal employment, with the special status does give federal agencies the option of directly selecting them for a vacant position if, of course, they are qualified. So again, it just serves as a means to forgo the lengthy hiring process.

So Jo, can everybody see your comment?

I think so.

You are so correct. So when the hiring freeze is lifted, I would imagine that any vacancy that you might have, you will be looking to get that filled as quickly as possible. So, these are some authorities of flexibilities that you might consider to get a person within your office as quickly as possible.

So, the slide here shows the number of tools and resources that are available for you to use that reference the hiring flexibility or authorities that we talked a little bit about today. The first one -- OPM Federal Hiring Disability Resource Center is just an overview of the things that I have mentioned today. As we discussed earlier, there is an OPM shared list of persons with disabilities. You can work through your SHRO HR specialist to gain access to this. This Feds Hire Vets is a resource that gives very specific information about how the veterans hiring authority works. And then within each region, there should be a regional [Indiscernible] who the coordinator that you can consult, along with your servicing HR specialist. >>

Which are likely to share the link to the Pathways portal on here?

We can share that as well -- would you like me to share the link to the Pathway portal here?

We can share that as well.

That concludes our presentation today. I hope you have some takeaways and things you want to consider if you have a vacant position and are given the green light to hire after the hiring freeze ends. So are there any questions? I think we have about 15 minutes.

I saw someone typing early, Angela. It might take a minute. No worries.

So that is the link to the Pathways database that Lisa just posted. Any questions for Angela? You can either unmute or type it into the chat box. I see no one typing. No hands are raised in the attendees pod. So, this is your last chance.

There is never a last chance. You can always reach out to your HR specialist.

Last chance before I cut them off.

All right. Looks like someone is typing in. I would echo Caryn's sentiment. Angela, thank you for the information today. Sandra, would like you to comment on -- for seasonals to get career status.

Is that part of the public lands?

I think that is the Land Management Workforce Flexibility act you are referencing, Sandra. So, that isn't necessarily a hiring authority or flexibility because it doesn't still require competition.

So, while it does assist in allowing seasonals to now apply under a promotional announcement, it still does require them to compete. So, we do have a policy with implementation guidance and some frequently asked questions about that, and if you have a vacancy that you are trying to fill, you can certainly work with your HR specialist to ensure that former seasonal employees are allowed the opportunity to apply.

Right. And then depending on who is applying, there are no guarantees for them, because you will hire the most qualified.

Correct. But it does serve as an avenue for our long-term seasonal and temporaries or terms to finally apply for jobs that would give them status.

Right, as an interim candidate.

Exactly. We will see if [Indiscernible] has a follow-up. No worries, Sandra. Thank you.

I just wanted to make sure I got your question but progress.

All right, great. Since I see no one else typing, I will again go [Indiscernible]. Thank you, Angela, for a good discussion on the Hiring Flexibilities that are available to us. Hopefully, there will be some opportunities for folks to apply some of these flexibilities to get folks more quickly hired

into their work unit. So thank you, Angela. Thank you all for being here. We have a break for lunch for folks. The next sessions starts up at 1:30 today, and we hope you enjoyed the 12 minutes we just gave you.