

# Hiring Flexibilities

## Virtual Conference for Supervisors

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My name is Jo Robinson; I will be the chat monitor for the session on hiring authority. We are in Classroom B. If you're looking in Job Analysis that is in Classroom A on the information on the bottom of the slide. Our presenter for the hiring authority session is Angela Hargrove. She's the Chief of Policy for Human Resources in the Washington office. Angela and Lisa, I will turn the mic over to you.

Hello, this is Lisa. Hello, this is Angela.

I want to say good afternoon and thank everyone for attending the training session on hiring flexibility. We use those words interchangeably. Flexibilities of authority. If you intend to get information about hiring authorities you are in the right place.

Just a few housekeeping instructions. Jo may have mentioned this, but I want to reiterate. We will ask that you put your phones on mute to alleviate any background noise; it might be distracting for our participants. Please put your phones on mute. We have built in a couple of breaks for questions. We will ask you hold them until then. You may use the chat box to raise questions and Jo and Lisa will be monitoring those as we go along. I welcome you all and we will get started.

I am hopeful that during the presentation each of you will walk away with a number of takeaways. One of the most important takeaways is in the hiring process is that it is a collaborative effort. I can't stress that enough. Hiring is a partnership between the hiring manager, the human resources specialist and in some cases the EEO specialist. Everyone has a role and responsibility that must be carried out to ensure the best candidate is selected and the hiring process is in compliance with laws, rules and regulations. I think one of the keys to any successful higher is communication. Whether the communication is virtual, on the phone or in person, that communication is essential to the process. Communication or good communication rather, can lead to better and faster results. This also leads to better hires, less expense, and less time [Indiscernible]. With good communication it's a win-win for everyone.

Managers must focus on planning the needed workforce requirements before the vacancy arises, to be more involved in recruitment activities. Such as job analysis, and the question assessment development. Often times what we see is that instead of trying to plan out the process, HR is contacted by the hiring manager when the position becomes vacant. In a lot of cases where there is a retirement, managers know and can begin to plan earlier on to address filling the position. As you are planning to fill positions, what we would suggest you consider possible interview techniques and any potential panel members that you might utilize before

the vacancy announcement closes. HR specialists need to partner with 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, the hiring manager can go into the hiring process informed about the areas underrepresentation in their organization, the essential competencies necessary to address the workload, and an awareness of the best method to available to get the right person in the right job and at the right time.

For our objectives, we are going to focus around defining the various hiring flexibilities or authorities. We will try to provide clarity on how the authorities are used and who is eligible. We will then talk about the advantages and benefits to using these flexibilities and then we will share with you a number of tools and resources that you can use in the future. I realize when you think about hiring, it can generate a number of questions. Not to mention we are currently under a hiring freeze. Because of the limited time we have today, I'm going to ask you stay within the parameters of the hiring flexibilities. As a reminder, you can always reach out to your [Indiscernible] when you have questions that pertain to other aspects of the hiring process. In the event we don't touch on those within our discussion today.

What is hiring flexibility? I would imagine in most cases 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. That means you are looking to reach candidates who are outside of the federal government. You may also consider using the promotion system where you are looking to reach candidates who are already in status or who are currently federal employees. In lots of cases, using these methods can take an extremely long time. Again, you have to perform a job analysis, develop assessment questions, you may even perform some outreach activities. You have to rate and rank applications, interview them, and wait for the background investigation.

I will pause for a moment and ask how long did it take for you to fill your last vacant position? We have a polling box. If you could take a moment to complete it. It looks like the majority seems to be anywhere from 6 to 12 months, which in a lot of cases is a long time because you have that amount of time where your position is vacant and you have to call in other resources to assist you in performing the work. Hopefully, today you will walk away with some tools that will shorten the length of time that it takes to fill any upcoming vacancies you may have.

Hiring flexibility serves as a means to bring on a new employee through a noncompetitive process. The noncompetitive process allows hiring managers to hire candidates without having to go through the full application process. Jobs are open to select candidates as opposed to the general public. Typically, those who have been a federal employee for at least three years. These flexibilities or authorities that we will talk about today exist to make the filling of a vacant position more timely and less cumbersome. When is it appropriate to use hiring flexibility? This can be determined by looking at the needs that you are trying to address

as you fill your vacant position. Here are a few questions that should be considered when you are trying to determine if hiring flexibility is an option you should pursue.

For example, will the hiring of a student into a developmental position meet your needs? Do you have time to train someone up, or do they need to hit the ground running? Can you consider hiring an individual with special needs? How might such a hire help increase the diversity in your park or program office? Finally, are you looking to hire someone within the federal government with 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 these flexibilities we will be talking about can help you meet your hiring goals.

The first set of flexibilities we will talk about today are associated with hiring veterans. As you can see on the screen, there are three authorities or flexibilities that acts to help government agencies attract veterans to the organization.

We have a polling question. I am curious. By a show of hands, have any of you used any of these veteran hiring authorities to bring on a new employee? I would ask over the course of the last 12 months, if you have used any of these to bring on someone new. It doesn't look like many of you have. I just see a couple of folks who have raised their hand. That's a good thing in some ways; hopefully, the information will be helpful.

I will be going through the various hiring authorities you can use to bring on a veteran. We can appoint veterans if they are qualified up to the GS 11 level without further competition. Upon satisfactory completion of a two-year appointment, veterans can be converted non-competitively to a career conditional appointment. For all veterans that receive an honorable discharge, they may be eligible under the veterans' recruitment authority appointment. A few examples would include a disabled veteran, a veteran who served on active duty in the Armed Forces during a war, or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized. Veterans who participated in a US military operation, for which an Armed Forces service medal was awarded may also be considered, and under this authority you can appoint recently separated veterans. We can use the VRA to fill permanent, temporary or term positions. It should be noted that the intent of these flexibilities are to provide veterans with opportunities for permanent full-time employment. I will reiterate while terms and temporaries can be the type of positions that are filled, the authorities were established to provide a permanent employment for these veterans. That is their primary purpose. You just want to keep that in mind as you are using the authorities.

The Veterans' Employment Opportunities Act is a competitive employment authority that can only be used when filling permanent, competitive service positions. This is a little different from the other authority that we are discussing. I wanted to highlight it because it serves as another tool available to you or that you can use to hire a veteran. Unlike the VRA, veterans have to apply under this authority to an announcement that is open to status to candidates. This means those employees or individuals who served under a current competitive service appointment or again who are currently employed with the federal government. A VEOA

must fill 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 VEOA eligibility can apply. However, current employees applying under VEOA are subject to time in grade restrictions like any other GS employee. We can also appoint a veteran with a service-connected disability of 30 percent or more without further competition. Under this category all eligible candidates may be appointed to any position for which they are qualified for any occupational grade level. The initial appointment is time-limited, but then veterans may be noncompetitively converted to a permanent status at any time during the time limited appointment. I want to point out there is a training conference or training workshop this week specifically geared towards veterans. If you are interested in obtaining additional information about how those authorities work, or how you can make them work for you, those are scheduled this week as well.

We will move on to the Schedule A authority. This is targeted for individuals with disabilities. Again, this is a noncompetitive hiring authority that agencies can use to appoint eligible individuals who have a severe physical, psychological, or intellectual disability. These physical disabilities can include, but are not limited to, such things as blindness, deafness, paralysis, epilepsy, and many more. Agencies can use this authority to appoint at any grade level, for any job, and be temporary, term, or permanent as long as the individual is qualified. After completing two years of satisfactory service, and a term or permanent accepted appointment, these individuals, very similar to many of the other authorities that we will talk about today, may be noncompetitively converted to a career or career conditional appointment. Hiring a Schedule A individual requires no public notice, and therefore should reduce the amount of time to fill the position.

If you are interested in pursuing an appointment for an employee with a disability, OPM maintains a shared list of people with disabilities. They work in partnership with a private firm to recruit and screen candidates who are interested in federal employment. A good many of them are already registered and they have experience in such areas as accounting, budget analysis, contact representatives, contracts, finance, HR, information technology, admin support and a variety of clerical positions throughout the United States. A database of resumes is available through hiring managers and HR. If you are not aware of this, you can reach out to your servicing HR specialist, and they can assist you in obtaining access to this information. Positions are available for applicants with disabilities who are early in their career up through senior career levels. This is a great opportunity for college students with disabilities, graduate students, and other experienced career professionals to work for federal agencies.

How does this work? As I mentioned earlier, there should be someone in your [Indiscernible] who has established a partnership with state offices in your area. They should be able to provide you a point of contact who can share information about upcoming job fairs designed to place candidates with disabilities into positions that they qualify for.

We will take a break to give you guys an opportunity to ask any questions. You are welcome to put the questions in the chat box if that is easier to do.

Being that there are no questions, we will move on to talk about a couple of other hiring authorities. The first one or the next one that I am sure many of you have used are the Pathways for students and Recent Graduates Program. Pathways is formally known as the student temporary employment program or the student career experience program which was previously known as STEP or SCEP. These are authorities available to students and recent graduates into federal service. The program is designed to provide students enrolled in a wide variety of educational institutions that can 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.

The Pathways program consists of three different areas and I will go through each of them. The first one is the internship program. This targets students enrolled in a wide variety of educational institutions. That ranges from high school to graduate level. This would include four year colleges and universities, community colleges, and junior colleges, as well as professional, vocational, and trade schools. The internship program offers agencies the flexibility to hire students on a short-term basis, in most cases not to exceed one year or for longer periods of time. If you decide to bring on a student who is in their second year of college, you would put them on an appointment and you could renew those appointments every year until they completed their education.

There is also the Recent Graduates Program. This is somewhat new or different and was established when Pathways was first set up. This is a brand-new one year developmental program which enables agencies to better recruit from recent graduates of trade and vocational schools, community colleges, and other qualifying educational institutions and programs.

Finally, the Presidential Management Fellows Program. This has been around for a very long time. I don't believe anything changed when Pathways started up; it's the same PMF program that was around the government for more than 30 years. It's considered the government's premier leadership development program for those students who have advanced degrees. The program focuses on developing a cadre of potential government leaders. Under Pathways the eligibility window for applicants was expanded. Graduates will have two years from completion of their degree requirements to apply to the program. Successful applicants will be placed in a two-year career development program that, like many of these, offer the noncompetitive conversion to the competitive service at a later time. Just a few things to remember which is different from the Pathways. A public notice is required, and along with that veterans' preference must be considered. I want to share with you a database that has been established that each of you have access through the employee center. I will take you there so you can see what that looks like.

We are going to open up the database so you can see it. Hopefully, you can see this. I am on the Pathways portal database. The front page is general information about the database. I want to go into it so you can see what this looks like. I will share information about how this works. As a supervisor, you should have access to it. If you do not and are interested in gaining access, please shoot me an email, and I will ensure that you do have access to the database.

How does this work? Well, let me walk through this with you briefly. Pathways employees coming up on their window of eligibility to key become converted would complete a form that allows them to include their background information, location preferences, and the type of position they are interested in. As you can see here, John Michael is eligible for conversion. His current position is a grant specialist. He's currently a GS-9. It lists his supervisor. Then it goes on to show the types of positions he is interested in, and the areas location. It provides information about the types of positions they are interested in and they are provided an opportunity to share additional comments. This allows you a more efficient way to pick up experienced employees who are working for the Park Service who are eligible to be converted to a permanent appointment. You can reach out to their supervisor to get references, you just need to work with your [Indiscernible] to ensure that the database is up-to-date and the information is up-to-date, and those employees are eligible for conversion.

Again, you can go in here and sort and look through you will see we have a variety of employees who are eligible for conversion. I can't say with a lot of honesty how often it's updated. As I recall, Pathways employees have the ability to go in and upload their information. You can certainly reach out to the employee and the supervisor to find out if they are still interested in being converted to a more permanent term position. If you find a potential vacancy, again, you reach out to the Pathways participant, and it's important to follow up with the servicing HR specialist. Again, before any offer is made you need to make sure it is coordinated. That is the database. Again, if you tried to go in and find that you cannot access it, again, shoot an email message and I will ensure that you obtain access. That is an efficient way to convert employees who are currently in our roles and eligible for conversion to appointment.

We are going to move on to another hiring flexibility. This flexibility was passed into legislation back in 2013. It is derived from internship program developed within the Controller's Office. This flexibility can be used to appoint a former resource assistant who has completed a rigorous undergraduate or graduate summer internship with a land management agency and who has successfully fulfilled the requirements of the internship program. Additionally, they must have earned a graduate or undergraduate degree from an accredited institution of higher learning. A qualified internship program must include a clearly defined deliverable or work product with clear expectations and outcomes. They must have served a minimum of 11 weeks of full-time work. That work must have been focused on critical thinking and real-world problem solving or Park Service problem solving. They must have presented findings to key decision-makers and they must have addressed certification of high-performance in the internship from the supervisor. These internship programs may be established at one or more of the following career fields: park monument and management, administration, natural

resources, environmental policy and management, historic and cultural resources management or business management and administration, along with the public policy and tourism. Jason Gibson is the WASO contact, if you are interested in establishing one of these internships. You may want to contact him if you are interested. They can be converted noncompetitively.

I can say that through experience within at least human resources at headquarters, there are some very strong candidates who come through this program. We were actually fortunate enough to pick up someone a couple of years ago who came through this program, and I have to say she has been an amazing asset to our organization. The program is designed to attract and recruit underrepresented groups and fulfill mission-critical and hard to fill applications. Current college students and recent graduates, with particular attention to assure full representation of women and participants from minority serving institutions or one of the focus areas.

I'm wondering with this information you are wondering how it may work. The internship requires a designated partner organization. This is tasked with recruiting a candidate, and most importantly, supporting the project with 100 percent of the cost for a cooperative agreement. I know a lot of the students are used to develop business plans for various park units and program areas. Once you determine the need you -- there are associated partnerships that are made available where you can obtain these. The interns are not considered a federal employee during the internship, but again if they do well, you can noncompetitively select them after they completed the internship. I shared an example with you regarding someone who works here in human resources that we could obtain through the program. She was, I believe, on a business plan project for a park at [Indiscernible] there, and then we were able to pick her up and convert her after she completed her degree. Again, some important factors to remember. Candidates may be appointed directly without competition. Veterans' preference does not apply. That is different from some of the other hiring flexibilities we talked about.

Angela, this is Jo. We had a comment in the chat pod. The Pathways student spreadsheet is on a SharePoint, correct?

Yes.

Who is responsible for keeping it up-to-date? Are they supposed to remove themselves when they are hired?

Students have the ability to go in and upload their information. That's why it's important to reach out to the regional supervisor to see if you are eligible. That is one of the challenges with this. There is not enough resources to allow us to update it as often as we would like. It may not be as current as it could be. Again, if you are interested in maybe reaching out to one of these individuals you should contact the employee and/or the supervisor, and you can always work with your representative to get that information as well.

If I am a supervisor and I hire one of these students, should I suggest to them that they go in - is that something that someone who hired the Pathways student should do?

I would not suggest they do that. Again, there's not enough resources to follow up on this as much as we would like. If you take the opportunity and decide to select the individual, you can shoot me an email and I will make sure the person is deleted from the spreadsheet or the database.

Thank you.

I haven't gone in here in some time, but it doesn't look like there have been many folks added, to be honest. The last time back in August of last year, when I gave this presentation I found a lot of supervisors and managers did not have access to the database, and so I'm thinking we want to - - I know we are in a freeze, but Pathways employees can be hired, maybe we should go out to make sure Pathways eligibles know they can update and put information into this database. We will make a note of that to see if we can get information out to our current employees. That was a good question.

I'm curious by a show of hands. Were there folks familiar with the Pathways database?

We are going to move on to the Public Land Corps Authority which is another flexibility available. This is another authority unique to the Department of Interior. This authority was established to provide work and education opportunities for young men and women in the area of natural and resource conservation or development. What it does is provide a noncompetitive hiring status to public corps members who served a minimum of 640 hours of satisfactory service on an appropriate conservation project that would've included at least 120 hours through the public land corps. Additionally, it must also meet OPM qualification standards and then the other qualification requirement that would be stated in the announcement for the position for which they are applying. Former land corps members must submit the public land corps participant work verification form and a certificate of eligibility as his or her last supervisor or youth program office coordinator for certification of signature. It's imperative there be documentation that reflects the number of hours the public land corps member completed. They have to ensure they meet those requirements. Former members who wish to use their noncompetitive hiring authority must apply to a specific vacancy announcement. That's different as well. They do have to apply after they completed their land corps service. They have 120 days or up to 120 days to complete service. I want to caution you guys. I think there was legislation passed this year that provided a larger or a greater window for which they could be converted.

We are waiting for the department to update the guidance and provide us with information. I think the new legislation just gave them a longer window and I think it also increased the age limit for them as well. It used to be 16-25. I think it was expanded to 16-32. More information will be made or available about that in the coming future.



Before you move on, [Indiscernible] wants to know did you say 120 days eligible for hire after completing service?

Yes. Yes. And again, I believe through the new legislation, that may have - - that was expanded. I will take a look at that for the rest of the week to make sure I have that new timeframe. Any other questions, Jo?

No. Nothing else in chat.

Moving onto one of the other hiring authorities. This is the Peace Corps and AmeriCorps VISTA hiring flexibility. There are possibly 220,000 Americans who served in the Peace Corps. They acquired a strong set of skills. It equips volunteers with skills and problem solving global awareness, intercultural communication and adaptability—all skill sets needed within the Park service workforce. Currently, there are about 7000 volunteers that consist of men and women representing a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

As hiring managers, you can benefit from the special noncompetitive eligibility hiring status returned Peace Corps volunteers have for one year after completing their Peace Corps service. Returned Peace Corps volunteers are granted noncompetitive eligibility for 12 months upon successful completion of their service. You are able to bring on a volunteer without having to go through the lengthy competitive hiring process. A vacancy announcement is not required, and so again, this is a much more expedient way of getting an employee on board. Volunteers in Service is another National Service program established to fight poverty and ensure these individuals have noncompetitive hiring eligibility. The member who meets the minimum qualifications for a federal job can be hired without having to compete with the general public. That means no vacancy announcement is required. With noncompetitive eligibility status potential employees don't gain entitlement to a specific job but the special status gives federal agencies the option of directly selecting an eligible individual for a vacant position if they are found to be qualified. That is important. We need to ensure that as with any employee, they qualify for the position for which they would be selected. If you are interested in pursuing this, you should reach out to your servicing HR specialist to obtain their assistance.

I provided a few resources you may find helpful in determining if one of these flexibilities will work for you. Also, you will see the website that will provide you with additional information. So, we have the OPM federal hiring flexibility resource center. This provides you with an overview of the various hiring authorities that exist. I mentioned earlier the OPM shared list of persons with disabilities. You can access that here, and again, you should work with your specialist to obtain additional information. There is a link that provides you with resources to pick up veterans or to provide you with information about those authorities you can use to bring them on board. Then there are regional selected placement coordinators and each of your regional offices that can provide you with other information about these types of hiring authorities. You should reach out to your regional program coordinator or your servicing HR specialist. That is always the primary go to in using any of these authorities.

That concludes our presentation for today. I may have gone through that a little quickly. If there are any questions we will take those now. We are open if you would like to ask a question over the phone or put your question in the comment box. Either way.

I think they are still drinking from the fire hose, Angela. That was a lot of information.

The question we have pertains to the certain disciplines that are eligible for the resource assistant internship. I have been asked to repeat them. They are - - a variety those. Those internship programs can be established in the following career field. Park, refuge, monument management and administration, natural resources management, environmental policy management, historic and cultural resources management, business management and administration, public policy administration and management, as well as tourism and hospitality services and resource protection. These disciplines cover a number of things we do here in the Park Service. In my experience, a good number of these internships have involved work in specific units and the program areas around such things as strategic planning or developing business plans and things of that sort. Thank you for the question.

I am being asked to go over the difference between Presidential Management Fellow and Recent Graduates. Both of those programs are geared toward candidates who have graduate degrees. The Presidential Management Fellow Program is a higher tier or level than the Recent Graduates Program. The Presidential Management Fellow Program focuses specifically on developing a cadre of potential government leaders. There is a much higher standard or requirement that the candidates have to go through in order to qualify. They work specifically with the Office of Personnel Management to be designated as a Presidential Management Fellow. Each year, there is a timeframe where an announcement goes out that asks the park program managers and park units they are interested in hiring a Presidential Management Fellow. We work directly with OPM to make the connection. That is different from the Recent Graduate Program. You can obtain the Recent Graduates Program is very similar to the other Pathways program, in that you have to issue a vacancy announcement. It's a one year developmental program that allows us to pick up graduates from trade, community colleges and things like that. The primary difference is the Presidential Management Fellow is an individual designated through an OPM process, which is different from the recent graduates program. We can pick those up ourselves without having to coordinate through OPM. That's the biggest difference.

Are there any other - - I see another question coming in.

This question pertains to Pathways and whether or not they are considered serving under a time-limited position under the Land Management Workforce Flexibility Act.

I want to be sure I understand the question. The Land Management Workforce Flexibility Act pertains to mostly employees who have served under a time-limited appointment that may not necessarily have been under a Pathways appointment. When the Land Management

Workforce Flexibility Act was put into law, they were trying to address those employees who have served years and years under a seasonal appointment or in most cases one of your term appointments that did not allow for conversion to a permanent appointment. The legislation was put in place to try to provide a window of opportunity for those employees to be considered for a permanent appointment. In most cases they are not Pathways employees. I am not going to rule that out. Based on what we have seen, they are usually employees that have served for years and years on temporary or term appointments who have not had the ability to be picked up on a permanent appointment - - they are usually not Pathways but I would not rule them out.

Thank you for your question.

One question I have is: do Pathways students or recent grads know they can enter themselves into the database?

I think it might be a good time to remind Pathways employees about that. I am going to go back to my office to see what we did when the database was set up. I think given the limited number of folks who are showing eligibility right now, I see less than 20 folks in here. I think it might be helpful to maybe perhaps target our Pathways employees who are on board now and make them aware of this and put a reminder out there. We can do that through InsideNPS, but I think it's a good reminder to folks that this exists. I thank you for that comment and we will see what we can do to make sure folks are aware it exists.

I have another question asking if there's a website or fact sheet that you can share with your supervisors that list the different authorities discussed here. I know a lot of the regions or [Indiscernible] within your various regions have tools around hiring flexibilities as Jo mentioned. This presentation will be shared with all of you. A hard copy of the slides will be shared. There might even be a hiring flexibility set of information about that on the employee center. That is a good resource for you to have as well. The slides will be shared and I am pretty sure your HR specialists have information and knowledge about all of the authorities that we talked about today.

Last chance for questions.

This is Angela. I greatly appreciate your attention and time. If you have - - I think I see another question coming in. Access to the database or any questions Angela.Hargrove@NPS.gov.

Thank you. I appreciate your information and time. We will see you again during the week. We don't let her get away that easy. We will finish up early today. Our next session starts at 4:00, that is in 19 minutes and it's on Telework Policy. If you are looking for the Veterans' Appointment Authority, and they said a little bit about that, but the next session goes into more detail around that. We will start up at 4 PM. Thank you all. Enjoy the 14 minutes we gave you today.