

VA USA HIRE SYSTEM IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

1. **PURPOSE.** This Notice updates the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Human Resources (HR) community with implementation guidance for using the USA Hire System to assess candidates for VA job opportunity announcements (JOA).
2. **POLICY.**
 - a. **Background.** The USA Hire standard package is an assessment tool that may be used to assess applicant general competencies for certain nonsupervisory occupations. It may be used alone for rating and ranking or for pass/fail ratings to determine if applicants meet the minimum level of proficiency or it can be used in conjunction with other assessment tools. Compliance with this policy will be recorded in USA Staffing.
 - b. **Definitions.**
 - (1) **Administration Talent Teams.** Partners who collaborate with the VA Talent Team to drive best practices for talent acquisition and talent development programs such as improving hiring outcomes (for example, developing assessment strategies, workforce planning, assessment tools, competency modeling, and so forth), and monitoring and evaluating selection outcomes.
 - (2) **Entry-Level Occupation Stage.** The entry-level is typically associated with a position for a recent graduate or a person with little to no prior experience in a field or occupation. This varies depending on the occupation.
 - (3) **Mid-Career Level Occupation Stage.** The mid-career level is typically associated with career stability and progression, general, or advance knowledge of occupational specific competencies and skill sets. This will range from the developmental level up to the journey level.
 - (4) **Advanced-Career Level Occupation Stage.** The advanced-career level is associated with tenure status in the occupation and the breadth of responsibilities, knowledge, and experience individuals are capable of performing. Individuals at this level are generally considered advanced or subject matter experts and usually operate in an advisory capacity.
 - (5) **Delegated Examining.** Announcements for selections made under an authority the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) delegates to agencies to fill competitive civil service jobs through a competitive process open to all U.S. citizens.
 - (6) **Merit Promotion.** Announcements for placements made under the authority of 5 C.F.R., Part 335, Promotion and Internal Placement.

- (7) **Administrative Careers with America (ACWA).** The resolution of the suit (known as the "*Luevano* consent decree") ended the Professional and Administrative Career Exam (PACE) examination and required the use of alternative assessments for the approximately 110 occupations at the GS-05 and GS-07 grade levels that were once subject to the PACE exam. OPM has developed two instruments that can be used: the ACWA Test or ACWA rating schedule. Agencies may also develop an ACWA assessment alternative that is consistent with the guidelines in the [Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures](#).
- (8) **Pathways Intern.** Announcements for selections made under the Pathways Internship Program.
- (9) **Recent Graduates.** Announcements for selections made under the Pathways Recent Graduate Program.
- (10) **Post-Secondary Students.** Announcements for selections made under the expedited hiring authority for post-secondary students.
- (11) **College Graduates.** Announcements for selections made under the expedited hiring authority for college graduates.
- (12) **Direct Hire.** Announcements for selections made under an authority that permits hiring under certain circumstances without regard to the provisions of [5 U.S.C. §§ 3309 through 3318](#), and [5 C.F.R., Parts 211 and 337 subpart A](#).

c. **VA Human Resources Office Staff Responsibilities.**

- (1) Conduct recruitment discussions with Hiring Officials to develop an assessment strategy that provides a robust, highly qualified, and diverse candidate pool.
- (2) Indicate in USA Staffing they are using a USA Hire assessment, then post JOAs consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and VA Policy.
- (3) Clear Priority Placement Programs, if required, by regulation or policy (for example, Career Transition Assistance Plan, Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan, Reemployment Priority List, Priority Placement List).
- (4) Conduct quality control reviews prior to issuing certificate/referral lists.
- (5) Maintain all documentation for issuing and reconstruction of the case file for HR office selections.
- (6) Ensure adjudication of reasonable accommodation requests prior to issuing certificates/referral lists.

- (7) HR office staff may share category assignment (for example, Best Qualified, Well Qualified, and so forth), or final rating (for example, pass/fail) information with applicants when requested. HR office staff shall not share individual assessment results or numerical scores with applicants since it is only the final rating that is used to refer applicants. The USA Hire helpdesk will not provide results to applicants.
- d. **Required Usage.** HR offices shall use the [USA Hire Standard Assessments](#) when it is available and the applicant pool is expected to be larger than 100 applicants for the following nonsupervisory announcement types:
- (1) **Delegated Examining.**
- (a) Miscellaneous Administration and Program Series 0301 and the title 5 positions listed on the VA Mission Critical Occupations List (Appendix A).
- (b) Entry-Level Positions (for example, typically, General Schedule (GS)-9 or below or the appropriate entry-level grade for the occupational series).
- (2) **Merit Promotion Governmentwide.**
- (a) Miscellaneous Administration and Program Series 0301 and the title 5 positions listed on the VA Mission Critical Occupations List (Appendix A).
- (b) Entry-Level Positions (for example, typically, GS-9 or below or the appropriate entry-level for the occupational series).
- NOTE:** In most cases, using USA Hire Assessments to determine minimum qualification will align with bargaining unit agreements for merit promotion announcements. Prior to using USA Hire to establish a Best Qualified (BQ) list for a bargaining unit position, consult with the appropriate collective bargaining agreement pertaining to the merit promotion article and/or consult with HR office staff and/or contact the Office of Labor Management Relations (vacolmr@va.gov).
- e. **Recommended Usage.** HR offices may use the [USA Hire Standard Assessments](#) when it is available and the applicant pool is expected to be larger than 100 applicants for the following nonsupervisory announcement types:
- (1) Delegated Examining. All other positions outside those in subparagraph 2d(1).
- (2) Merit Promotion. All other positions outside those in subparagraph 2d(2).
- (3) ACWA Assessment Alternative.

- (4) Pathways Intern.
 - (5) Recent Graduates.
 - (6) Post-Secondary Students.
 - (7) College Graduates.
 - (8) Direct Hire Authority.
- f. **Mid-Career and Advanced-Career.** If HR office staff uses USA Hire for jobs that are covered by the [USA Hire Standard Assessments](#) tool, they shall also use an occupational assessment questionnaire to measure the technical competencies. When the USA Hire assessment and an occupational assessment questionnaire are used together, USA Staffing will automatically calculate the applicants' final scores and default to weighting the assessments equally: 50% from USA Hire and 50% from the occupational assessment questionnaire. A VA Administration's Talent Team or an Administration-level HR designee may manually change the defaulted weighting to a different weighting when justified by the job analysis for the position being announced. To manually change the defaulted rating, an Administration shall develop guidance to help make these decisions.
- g. **USA Hire Cut Scores.** For the following 12 occupational series, USA Hire standard assessment requires that applicants meet a cut score, the minimum score an applicant shall obtain for further consideration in the hiring process:
- (1) Security Administration, GS-0080
 - (2) Human Resources Management, GS-0201
 - (3) Human Resources Assistance, GS-0203
 - (4) Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistance, GS-0303
 - (5) Secretary, GS-0318
 - (6) Management and Program Analysis, GS-0343
 - (7) Financial Administration and Program, GS-0501
 - (8) Accounting, GS-0510
 - (9) Budget Analysis, GS-0560
 - (10) Contact Representative, GS-0962
 - (11) Contracting, GS-1102

(12) Information Technology Management, GS-2210

- h. **Public Announcements (All U.S. Citizens).** The cut scores will always be on for JOAs that are open to all sources.
 - i. **Status/Internal VA Announcement.** Cut scores will be turned off for these JOAs, but VA will allow an Administration's Talent Team or an Administration-level HR designee to approve turning this feature on when it is a business necessity. An example of a business necessity for appropriate use of a cut score may be when there are large number of internal candidates who apply for a Governmentwide career developmental opportunity. Administrations shall develop guidance to help make these decisions.
 - j. **Hybrid Title 38 Occupations under 38 U.S.C. § 7401(3) (HT-38).** The Veterans Health Administration will develop guidance that provides the specific occupations that may use the USA Hire assessment tool.
 - k. **Limited Applicant Pool.** Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer does not recommend using USA Hire standard assessments for JOAs (unless mandated) under the following scenarios:
 - (1) When the number of JOA applicants is expected to be less than 50, consider carefully and seek further guidance from the Administration's Talent Team or an Administration-level HR designee before using USA Hire assessments.
 - (2) When the typical applicant pool would be deterred from completing an assessment and the occupation is in critical demand, seek further guidance from the Administration's Talent Team or an Administration-level HR designee before using USA Hire assessments (for example, shortage occupations with very specialized skills or experience).
 - l. **Other Occupational Groups.** HR office staff shall not use USA Hire standard assessments for the following job announcements.
 - (1) Wage Grade Occupations (including Wage Leaders and Wage Supervisors).
 - (2) Full Title 38 Occupations under [38 U.S.C. § 7401 \(1\)](#).
- 3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Office of Human Resources and Administration/ Operations, Security, and Preparedness (006), Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (05), Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059).
- 4. RELATED HANDBOOK:** VA Handbook 5005, Staffing, dated April 2002.
- 5. RESCISSIONS:** This Notice will be rescinded when revised VA Handbook 5005 is published to include USA Hire guidance within one year.

CERTIFIED BY:

/s/
Guy T. Kiyokawa
Assistant Secretary for
Enterprise Integration

**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

/s/
Cassandra M. Law
Assistant Secretary for
Human Resources and Administration/
Operations, Security, and Preparedness

DISTRIBUTION: Electronic Only

APPENDIX A. Department of Veterans Affairs Mission Critical Occupational Series

- 0080 Security Administration Series
- 0201 Human Resources Management
- 1102 Contracting
- 2210 Information Technology Management
- 0180 Psychologist
- 0602 Physician
- 0610 Nursing
- 0996 Veterans Claims Examining
- 3566 Custodial Worker
- 4754 Cemetery Caretaking
- 0901 General Legal and Kindred Administration Series
- 0185 Social Worker

NOTE 1: To review the most recent VA Mission Critical Occupations List and the related series basic titles visit: [VA Mission Critical Occupations \(sharepoint.com\)](https://sharepoint.com)

NOTE 2: Positions appointed under 38 U.S.C. § 7401 (1) are excluded from the USA Hire assessment tool.