



U.S Office of
Management and Budget

U.S Office of
Personnel Management



MEMORANDUM

TO: Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

FROM: Matthew J. Vaeth, Acting Director, Office of Management and Budget;
Charles Ezell, Acting Director, Office of Personnel Management

DATE: January 20, 2025

RE: Federal Civilian Hiring Freeze Guidance

1. Purpose. This memorandum provides additional guidance regarding the freeze on the hiring of federal civilian employees as directed by the President on January 20, 2025, via Presidential Memorandum (PM) entitled “Hiring Freeze.” This guidance clarifies immediate actions to be taken by Heads of executive departments and agencies to implement the PM and provides information on the types of exemptions authorized under this hiring freeze as well as instructions on how departments and agencies can request exemptions from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) for critical situations where additional exemptions may be warranted.

2. Coverage. This memorandum applies to all Executive departments and agencies regardless of the sources of their operational and programmatic funding and to all types of Federal civilian appointments, regardless of the length of the appointment, except as provided for below or otherwise provided in law. No vacant positions existing at 11:59 A.M. on January 20, 2025, may be filled and no new positions may be created, except in limited circumstances. For the purposes of this memorandum, a position is not considered vacant if an individual has been given an offer of employment prior to noon on January 20, 2025, has signed an offer letter in acceptance of the position, and has a designated start date on or before February 8, 2025. All positions that are not exempt from the hiring freeze must be unlisted from USAJOBS.gov and any other applicable websites no later than January 21. Any recruiters seeking to fill positions on behalf of the government must cease correspondence with candidates no later than January 21.

Contracting outside the Government to circumvent the intent of the PM shall not be permitted. For example, agencies shall not acquire by contract with a commercial vendor services that are substantially similar to those that would have been provided by a Federal civilian in a vacancy covered by the PM.

3. Mandatory Exemptions. For the following exemptions, hiring of veterans shall be prioritized in accordance with veterans’ preference statutes. The following exemptions to the Federal civilian hiring freeze are required:

- a. Military personnel in the armed forces and all Federal uniformed personnel, including the U.S. Coast Guard, the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service, and the Commissioned Officer Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.
- b. Positions related to immigration enforcement, national security, or public safety.
- c. The nomination and appointment of officials to positions requiring Presidential appointment or Senate confirmation, the appointment of officials to non-career positions in the Senior Executive Service or to Schedule A or C positions in the Excepted Service, the appointment of officials through temporary organization hiring authority pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 3161, or the appointment of any other non-career employees or officials, if approved by agency leadership appointed by the President.

Agency heads shall consult with the OPM in determining the scope and extent of positions covered by these mandatory exemptions.

4. Other exemptions. For the following exemptions, hiring of veterans may be prioritized. In addition, the following exemptions to the Federal civilian hiring freeze are permitted:

- a. Filling of positions under programs where limiting the hiring of personnel would conflict with applicable law.
- b. Nomination and appointment of officials to positions requiring Presidential appointment, with or without Senate confirmation.
- c. Appointment of seasonal employees and short-term temporary employees necessary to meet traditionally recurring seasonal workloads, provided that the agency informs its OMB Resource Management Office in writing in advance of its hiring plans.
- d. Hiring by the U.S. Postal Service.
- e. Appointments made prior to January 20, 2025, under the Pathways Internship and Presidential Management Fellows programs (this does not include the Recent Graduates program): Agencies shall review such appointments on a case by case basis. Agencies should ensure that such hires understand the provisional nature of these appointments and that retention is not guaranteed.
- f. Conversions in the ordinary course to the competitive service of current agency employees serving in positions with conversion authority, such as the Veterans' Recruitment Act (VRA).
- g. Appointments made under 5 C.F.R. § 213.3102(r) (time limited positions in support of fellowship or professional/industry exchange programs) provided that the total number of individuals employed under this authority does not exceed the number of employees onboard (hired under this authority) on January 20, 2025.

- h. Placement of persons with restoration rights accorded by law, such as restoration after absence with injury compensation and restoration after military duty.
- i. Job offers made prior to noon on January 20, 2025, for which the individual has accepted the position and has a designated start date on or before February 8, 2025. Those individuals should report to work according to their respective designated start date.
- j. Job offers made and accepted prior to January 20, 2025, but for which the individual has a confirmed start date that is later than February 8, 2025 (or does not have a confirmed start date), are revoked. If an agency head would like to renew an offer, the agency head should consider essential mission priorities, current agency resources, and funding levels when making determinations about whether to reinstate job offers. If the agency head decides to reinstate the offer, the agency head must seek written approval from OPM before proceeding to hire the employee.
- k. Internal career ladder promotions.
- l. Reallocations (i.e., noncompetitive reassignments and details) of current Federal civilian employees within an agency to meet the highest priority needs (including preservation of national security and other essential services) are not affected. Details (reimbursable and non-reimbursable) between agencies are also not affected; however, agency leadership should ensure that any reimbursable details between agencies are not being used to circumvent the intent of the hiring freeze.
- m. Term and temporary appointments of existing Federal employees may be extended up to the maximum allowable time limit, consistent with the conditions/requirements of the legal authority originally used to appoint the employee.
- n. A limited number of voluntary transfers of current SES between agencies, as necessary to secure the leadership capacity of agencies, and where needs cannot be met by reallocation of resources within an agency's current workforce; however, filling of such vacancies is subject to OPM approval in accordance with section 5 below.
- o. The head of any agency may exempt any positions that it deems necessary to:
 - i. Meet national security (including foreign relations) responsibilities, that are not covered by Section 3, or
 - ii. Meet public safety responsibilities that are not covered by Section 3 (including essential activities to the extent that they protect life and property). Agencies may refer to longstanding guidance, which provides examples of such activities in OMB Memorandum. Agency Operations in the Absence of Appropriations dated 11/17/1981 [see examples 3(a) to 3(k)].

Agency heads should consult with appropriate personnel, including the agency Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO) or equivalent and agency counsel when determining what positions to exempt from the hiring freeze. Agency heads are also required to obtain the approval of the OMB Resource Management Office before seeking the approval of OPM to exempt positions using their agency head authority before implementing these exemptions. This approval must be requested and received in writing before any exemption to the hiring freeze is permitted. Note that in the case of an Inspector General's (IG) office, the Inspector General is considered the agency head for the purposes of determining which positions in the IG office are exempt based on the definitions above, as well as for the purposes of the agency-head review of job offers in the IG office that either do not have a start date or have a designated start date beyond February 1, 2025.

5. Exemptions Granted by OPM. OPM may grant additional exemptions from the hiring freeze for critically important situations, such as ensuring the highest-quality possible provision of Social Security, Medicare, and veterans' benefits. Accordingly, if an agency head assesses that circumstances warrant additional exemptions to the hiring freeze other than those specified above, a request must be made in writing to OPM and signed by the agency head. OPM must approve the request in writing prior to moving forward. The request must:

- Explain the critical need and how it relates to essential services or critical mission requirements.
- Explain why reallocation (reassignment/detail) of existing staff within the agency is not possible to meet the needs outlined in the request.
- Explain the urgency of the need and the consequences of not filling the position within a 3 to 6 month timeline.

Agencies must also notify their respective OMB Resource Management Office of exemption requests to OPM under this provision. Agencies should submit exemption requests to OPM at employ@opm.gov for non-SES positions, with a copy to Amanda Scales at amanda.scales@opm.gov. For approval to transfer executives under Section 4(n), agencies should submit their request to SERS@opm.gov, with a copy to Amanda Scales at amanda.scales@opm.gov.

6. Effective Dates. The guidance in this memorandum is effective immediately. Within 90 days of the publication of the PM issued on January 20, 2025, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), in consultation with the Director of OPM and the Administrator of the United States DOGE Service (USDS), shall submit a plan to reduce the size of the Federal Government's workforce through efficiency improvements and attrition. The hiring freeze will expire upon implementation of the OMB plan, with the exception of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The freeze shall remain in effect for the IRS until the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Director of OMB and the Administrator of USDS, determines that it is in the national interest to lift the freeze.

7. Reports. On the last day of each month, the head of any agency subject to the hiring freeze shall send a report to OPM at employ@opm.gov with the following:

- Name, Job Title, Pay Plan, Series, Grade, Manager Name, Offered Date (date offer was extended), Intended Start Date, and Date of OPM Approval for all job candidates who were extended offers in that month
- Name, Job Title, Pay Plan, Series, Grade, Manager Name, Offered Date (date offer was extended), Intended Start Date, and Date of OPM Approval for all job candidates who accepted offers in that month
- Name, Job Title, Pay Plan, Series, Grade for all new employees who started that month
- Name, Job Title, Pay Plan, Series, and Grade for all employees who departed in that month
- Total employee headcount
- List of positions listed on USAJOBS and/or any other websites discoverable online

8. Inquiries. Questions from departments and agencies regarding the instructions and guidance in this memorandum should be addressed to agency OMB Resource Management Officers and the OPM Office of Workforce Policy and Innovation at employ@opm.gov, with a copy to Amanda Scales at amanda.scales@opm.gov.

Appendix: Summary of Required Actions by Agency Heads

Important: Please be advised that OPM will remove all postings on USAJOBS.gov that do not clearly meet exemption criteria as described in this memo. Agency head may request approval to reinstate any postings with Amanda Scales, Chief of Staff, OPM at amanda.scales@opm.gov.

ACTION: Agency head must send a summary email to the Chief of Staff, OPM confirming once all of the actions outlined below have been completed and no later than January 22, 2025. OMB shall be cc'd for awareness on this email.

- Offers signed prior to 12pm on January 20, 2025 with a start date ON OR BEFORE February 8, 2025
 - ACTION: Continue/proceed with hiring/onboarding process.
- Offers signed prior to 12pm on January 20, 2025 with (a) a start date AFTER February 8, 2025 OR (b) an unconfirmed start date
 - ACTION:
 - Agency head ensures all of these offers are revoked no later than 5:00 pm EST on January 21, 2025, unless the agency head specifically determines in writing that the offer should be reinstated.
 - If agency head determines that any of these offers should be reinstated, agency head must request and receive approval in writing (via email) from the Chief of Staff, OPM before moving forward with the offer(s). The request should cite the relevant exemption criteria and justifications as outlined in the memo before moving forward. OMB shall be cc'd for awareness on this request. The agency head shall perform this review in bulk and send one email request, with all offers and their justifications listed, for OPM review and approval.
- Vacant positions as of 12pm on January 20, 2025
 - ACTION:
 - Agency head ensures hiring managers, recruiters, and any other employees involved in the hiring process at any stage, instruct candidates that we are no longer hiring for the role and cease correspondence no later than 5:00 pm EST on Tuesday, January 21, 2025.
 - If agency head determines that any of these jobs are exempt from the hiring freeze per the criteria outlined in this memo, and therefore should continue to be posted, agency head must request and receive approval in writing (via email) from the Chief of Staff, OPM before implementing these exemptions. The request should cite the relevant exemption criteria and justifications outlined in the memo before moving forward. OMB shall be cc'd for awareness on this request.

- Jobs posted to USAJOBS.gov and/or any other external website used to market jobs with the federal government
 - ACTION:
 - Agency head ensures that all jobs currently posted to USAJOBS, and any other external website concurrently in use to market jobs (for example, Monster or LinkedIn) with the federal government, are removed no later than 5:00 pm EST on Tuesday, January 21, 2025.
 - If agency head determines that any of these jobs are exempt from the hiring freeze per the criteria outlined in this memo, and therefore should continue to be posted and actively recruited for, agency head must request and receive approval in writing (via email) from the Chief of Staff, OPM before implementing these exemptions. The request should cite the relevant exemption criteria and justifications outlined in the memo. OMB shall be cc'd for awareness on this request.

Notification of Updates to Systems & Processes:

To ensure the hiring freeze is observed, (1) OPM may communicate updates to job posting and offer approval procedures, and (2) agency heads are required to provide OPM with a monthly report (details outlined in the Reports section below).

Required Reports:

On the last day of each month, the head of any agency subject to the hiring freeze shall send a report to the Chief of Staff, OPM and to employ@opm.gov, with OMB cc'd for awareness, with the below:

- Job candidates who were extended offers in that month:
 - (1) Name, (2) Job Title, (3) Manager Name, (4) Offered Date (date offer was extended), (5) Intended Start Date, and (6) Date of OPM Approval
- Job candidates who signed offers in that month:
 - (1) Name, (2) Job Title, (3) Manager Name, (4) Offered Date (date offer was extended), (5) Intended Start Date, and (6) Date of OPM Approval
- Employees who departed in that month:
 - (1) Name, (2) Job Title
- Total employee headcount
- List of positions on USAJOBS and/or any other websites discoverable online