



Federal Recruitment **MYTHS** and **TRUTHS**

We encourage you to rethink some common myths and mis-perceptions.

1. **MYTH:** We actively recruit because we advertise our jobs on USAJOBS.

TRUTH: Recruitment (actively marketing your job openings) is often confused with public notice (posting a job opportunity announcement on USAJOBS). Public notice simply explains to job seekers when, where, and how to apply for a Federal job and is required whenever you are considering hiring applicants from outside your Federal workforce for competitive service positions.

Public notice is only one part of the overall recruitment process. Simply posting a job opportunity announcement on USAJOBS is not a substitute for more focused recruiting to fill positions with highly qualified applicants. Each recruitment opportunity is unique; what works for one agency or position may not work for another.

(Delegated Examining Operations Handbook, 2007 (DEOH), Chapter 3, Section B)

www.opm.gov/deu/Handbook_2007/DEO_Handbook.pdf

Effective recruitment requires developing and marketing customized messages. Use a variety of tools to produce a high quality applicant pool rather than relying solely on a job opportunity announcement as the cornerstone of your recruitment strategy.

2. **MYTH:** Agencies can't use social media or other recruiting and marketing methods used by the private sector.

TRUTH: Agencies may use (and ARE using!) a variety of tools such as, social media; paid advertising; job fairs; web-based recruiting sites; contracted recruiting support from other Federal agencies or commercial firms (5 CFR part 300, subpart D).

3. **MYTH:** Targeted recruitment violates Merit System Principles.

TRUTH: Targeted recruitment focuses your resources and efforts in areas most likely to yield results. When you use a targeted recruitment strategy, you market your job openings directly to known audiences (e.g., professional organizations in the field of interest; academic institutions with the degrees required for the position, etc.). Targeted recruitment supplements your USAJOBS job opportunity announcement posting and expands your talent pool. The best candidates you are eligible to hire come from those who apply, so make sure your sourcing methods reach top talent!

Learn about the labor market for your particular position to help determine an effective targeted recruitment strategy. Think strategically and creatively about a variety of recruiting and advertising methods. Consider where your marketing efforts would most likely reach your talent pool. For example, one agency advertised Nationwide during a major sporting event where they knew their target recruits would attend. Another ran commercials on daytime television to reach their talent pool. Yet another advertised on an employee's blog because the employee has an avid "following" in that particular career field.

4. **MYTH:** Inviting people to apply for job openings violates Merit System Principles.

TRUTH: There is no statute or regulation that says you cannot invite people to apply for your job openings. Use your contacts and networks to 'put out the word' about your job opening. The ability to invite people to apply is especially useful for hard to fill positions. However, you can't invite someone to apply with the intention of selecting that particular individual!

"Recruitment should be from qualified individuals from appropriate sources in an endeavor to achieve a work force from all segments of society, and selection and advancement should be determined solely on the basis of relative ability, knowledge and skills, after fair and open competition which assures that all receive equal opportunity." (Title 5, U.S.C. Section 2301 Merit System Principles (b)(1))

5. **MYTH:** We can't describe specific experience needed unless it's "spelled out" in the OPM qualification standards.

TRUTH: Because a published OPM qualification standard may cover hundreds of positions in dozens of organizations, it must be broad enough to cover the range of work classified to the occupational series. Therefore, OPM qualification standards allow agencies to pinpoint the specific requirements (e.g., specialized experience) necessary for performing the work. In fact, agencies are responsible for describing the specialized experience to applicants in the job opportunity announcement.

Hiring Managers, this is your opportunity to narrow the field of applicants to those who meet your position-specific requirements. Of course, you can't add specific experience that isn't really required or that is so specific that only one or a handful of people could possibly qualify! Work with your HR professionals to define the knowledge, skills, abilities/competencies needed for the job.

Specialized experience typically is required for positions above the entry level where applicants must have demonstrated they have the ability to perform successfully the duties of a position after a normal orientation period. The Hiring Manager and HR, together, need to describe the specialized experience, in the Job Opportunity Announcement. An example may be that to meet the specialized experience requirements for a medical technician position, the applicant would likely be required to have a specific level of experience performing duties such as preparing culture media and stains and performing certain laboratory tests.

For more information, refer to *General Policies: E. Application of Qualification Standards* (www.opm.gov/qualifications/policy/ApplicationOfStds-01.asp).

6. **MYTH:** We can't recruit for specific skills, such as a particular foreign language, because it isn't listed in the OPM qualification standard.

TRUTH: You can recruit for specific required skills. Hiring Managers and HR professionals, you must work together to ensure the job description contains all the position requirements. As long as a knowledge, skill, or ability/competency is necessary to perform the job and is something that cannot be learned in a reasonable amount of time, you may recruit for it. For example, if speaking a particular foreign language fluently is a requirement, then recruit for that skill. Simply document these "selective placement factors" based on your job analysis and clearly state them in all of your job advertisements.

Remember to use effective recruitment strategies to find qualified prospective applicants. Don't rely solely on your job opportunity announcement posting to attract applicants.

Hiring Manager involvement, as required by the President's Hiring Reform initiative, along with clear and descriptive job announcements written in plain language, and containing clearly-specified skills sets (knowledge, skills, abilities/competencies) supported by strategic recruitment efforts are the most effective ways of ensuring a high quality applicant pool for each job to be filled.

7. **MYTH:** Unlike the private sector, we can't use compensation flexibilities to recruit top talent.

TRUTH: You can recruit for top talent using private sector-style incentives! Recruitment, relocation, and retention incentives (3Rs) are compensation flexibilities available to help Federal agencies recruit and retain a world-class workforce. The 3Rs are administered under 5

U.S.C. 5753 and 5754 and 5 CFR part 575, subparts A, B, and C. For more information, please go to <http://www.opm.gov/3rs/Index.asp>.

- **Recruitment Incentives** are used to attract new employees to work in positions that are likely to be difficult to fill.
- **Relocation Incentives** are used to encourage current employees to relocate to positions in a different geographic area that are likely to be difficult to fill.
- **Retention Incentives** are paid to current employees with unusually high or unique qualifications or to meet a special need of the agency and only when the employee would be likely to leave under certain conditions.

Additionally, the Federal **Student Loan Repayment Program** permits agencies to repay Federally insured student loans as a recruitment or retention incentive for candidates or current employees of the agency. The program implements 5 U.S.C. 5379, which authorizes agencies to set up their own student loan repayment programs to attract or retain highly qualified employees. For more information, go to www.opm.gov/oca/pay/StudentLoan/.

8. **MYTH:** We can't recruit because we aren't hiring right now.

TRUTH: If you build relationships with schools, professional associations, and other organizations even when you are not hiring, they are more receptive and better able to help when you are ready to hire. By maintaining a relationship, you become a familiar and trusted resource. For example, you may present to a group of people and someone in the audience will learn about your agency or the type of work performed in your organization for the first time. Later, this person's awareness about your mission increases the likelihood he or she will apply to jobs in your organization or they may recommend your organization to others.

NOTE: Regulatory procedures, agency policies, and collective bargaining agreements, if any, apply in conjunction with the scenarios described above. Agencies must follow all applicable rules and provisions pertaining to the responses contained in the "Truths" noted above.