

Addressing Skills-Based Hiring in the Next Administration

Opportunity@Work and America Forward jointly recommend that the Trump-Vance Administration prioritize actions to advance implementation of skills-based talent strategies in the federal government within the first one hundred days. This effort would naturally build on the efforts of the Trump Administration to remove unnecessary degree requirements from the majority of federal public service jobs and promote skills-based hiring assessments through [Executive Order 13932](#).

This effort should be a priority for the Administration because:

- The Federal Government wields significant power to shape employment opportunities for workers by ensuring its talent strategy focuses on the skills necessary for the job. The Federal government is the largest single employer in the U.S. workforce [employing nearly 3 million people](#) nationwide while having a massive impact on working conditions for nearly [4 million federal contractors](#) through over 200,000 contractor firms.
- Federal skills-based hiring reforms stand to benefit 70+ million workers—half of the workforce—who are [skilled through alternative routes \(STARs\)](#) rather than a bachelor's degree. These workers have gained valuable in-demand skills through community college, the military, partial college, training programs, and on-the-job, but have experienced a dramatic decrease in economic mobility over the past three decades. Too often, unnecessary bachelor's degree requirements in Federal hiring and procurement have excluded these workers to their and our nation's detriment.
- There remains significant work to be done to ensure federal agencies fulfill the promise of skills-based hiring to drive economic mobility. Shifting hiring practices over the long-term will require a large-scale change management effort across federal agencies, alongside new policy changes to eliminate inappropriate credential-based barriers in federal procurement.

As such, the Administration should take the following steps within the first hundred days:

1) Invest and convene stakeholders on the implementation of skills-based talent strategies

We urge the Administration to take immediate action to fulfill the promise of the initial skills-based hiring executive order under the Trump -Vance Administration]. By investing in implementation and championing sharing practices across sectors and levels of government, this Administration can be at the forefront of leading transformational change in the labor market at a time when the nation is facing critical challenges. This Executive Order should:

- Require the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to establish a coordinating anchor office, the Office of Skills-Based Hiring, for

- skills-based hiring as a single lead point of contact.
- Charge this new Office to, within 6 months, develop and begin to implement a set of recommendations on ways to advance skills-based hiring in Federal hiring and procurement such as new guidance, regulatory actions, and broader cultural changes. These recommendations should be informed by extensive engagement with the field, including convenings with a diverse set of local, state, and federal public sector leaders as well as stakeholders from the private sectors who can share their experiences from the ground and inform collective actions to achieve progress.
- Direct OPM to assign funding necessary to support this effort, recognizing many of the current efforts related to skills-based practices within the federal government have been unfunded mandates.

2) Implement an Executive Order to remove unnecessary degree requirements from the federal procurement process

We recommend the Administration immediately put forward an Executive Order that removes unnecessary degree requirements from the federal procurement process. Agencies have often imposed such requirements despite contractors' interest in a skills-based approach. This Executive Order should:

- Include a simple requirement that federal agencies themselves cannot require contract positions to have a bachelor's degree for a role for which they do not require a Federal employee to hold the same credential.
- Amend the contractor evaluation to give preference to employers who demonstrate the use of skills-based talent practices to support individuals from historically excluded communities, like STARs, who have skills for in-demand jobs, but do not have a bachelor's degree.

Action is necessary to enable our economy to capitalize on all of the potential and talent that exists in communities across the country. The federal government's leadership and actions on this issue can influence others in the public and private sector to take similar action. These actions, together, can rewire the labor market to one that is inclusive of all workers, providing access to career opportunities to individuals with the skills for jobs—regardless of where they gained them. We welcome the opportunity to discuss these recommendations with you. Please contact Gina Rosen (Gina@opportunityatwork.org), Senior Manager of Policy at Opportunity@Work and Chase Sackett (chase_sackett@americaforward.org), Policy Director at America Forward.