

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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### MEMORANDUM

July 18, 2022

**To: Members of the Subcommittee on Government Operations**

**Fr: Committee Staff**

**Re: Hearing on “The Future of Federal Work II”**

On **Thursday, July 21, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. ET, in room 2154 of the Rayburn House Office Building and on the Zoom video platform**, the Subcommittee on Government Operations will hold a hearing to examine efforts to recruit and retain top talent in the federal government and rebuild, strengthen, and transform the federal workforce to meet the needs of the country in the 21st century.

#### I. BACKGROUND

The coronavirus pandemic upended traditional notions of work across every sector. The federal government is no exception. The pandemic prompted federal agencies to rapidly adapt to changing circumstances and disruptions in nimble and creative ways. The pandemic also forced agencies to confront outdated workforce policies and legacy information technology systems that were unprepared to facilitate mission execution.<sup>1</sup>

In November 2021, the Biden Administration released a blueprint for the President’s Management Agenda (PMA), which highlights the need for a government that can deliver for all Americans by focusing on three critical areas for bold transformation:

1. Strengthening and empowering the federal workforce;
2. Delivering excellent federal services and improved customer experience; and

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<sup>1</sup> Government Accountability Office, *Selected Agencies Overcame Technology Challenges to Support Telework but Need to Fully Assess Security Controls* (Sep. 30, 2021) (GAO-21-583) (online at [www.gao.gov/products/gao-21-583](https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-21-583)).

### 3. Managing the business of government to build back better.<sup>2</sup>

The blueprint highlights the need for a robust system to hire, retain, and develop the workforce needed to deliver agency missions. It also emphasizes lessons learned from the pandemic by highlighting the need for a nimble, forward-thinking federal workforce.<sup>3</sup>

Federal agencies face a difficult task of finding and recruiting talent to the civil service in a highly competitive job market.<sup>4</sup> Administration leaders must consider lessons learned from the pandemic about what employees desire in a work environment—in terms of benefits and flexibilities—to ensure agencies retain the expertise and talent needed to achieve their missions.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is helping agencies move from education-based to skills-based hiring. May 2022 guidance from OPM encourages federal agencies to “focus on what candidates know how to do, not where they learned it.”<sup>5</sup> The OPM guidance seeks to:

- Make it easier for those who do not have a four-year degree to demonstrate that they have the skills to compete for federal jobs, thereby expanding pools of potential applicants and removing barriers for underrepresented communities; and
- Help hiring managers accurately assess a candidate’s knowledge, skills, and abilities by relying more on professionally developed competency-based assessments and less on occupational questionnaires only where applicants are asked to score themselves on competencies necessary for the job.

Companies in the private sector are increasingly leveraging flexibilities like telework to recruit and retain talent, incentivize productivity and engagement, and support workers’ desire for more work-life balance. An analysis of job postings on FlexJobs between 2021 and 2022 showed that fully remote positions rose from 60% to 72% of postings, even as much of the United States has continued to re-open.<sup>6</sup> According to another analysis of the private sector job

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<sup>2</sup> The White House, *The Biden-Harris Management Agenda Vision: Toward an Equitable, Effective, and Accountable Government that Delivers Results for All* (Nov. 2021) (online at [https://assets.performance.gov/PMA/Biden-Harris\\_Management\\_Agenda\\_Vision\\_11-18.pdf](https://assets.performance.gov/PMA/Biden-Harris_Management_Agenda_Vision_11-18.pdf)).

<sup>3</sup> The White House, *Updates on the President’s Management Agenda* (Feb. 17, 2022) (online at [www.whitehouse.gov/omb/briefing-room/2022/02/17/updates-on-the-presidents-management-agenda/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/briefing-room/2022/02/17/updates-on-the-presidents-management-agenda/)).

<sup>4</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, *The Employment Situation – June 2022* (July 8, 2022) (online at [www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empisit.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empisit.pdf)).

<sup>5</sup> Memorandum from Kiran A. Ahuja, Director, Office of Personnel Management, to Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, *Guidance Release – E.O. 13932; Modernizing and Reforming the Assessment and Hiring of Federal Job Candidates* (May 19, 2022) (online at [www.chcoc.gov/sites/default/files/EO13932-Guidance-Memo\\_508.pdf](http://www.chcoc.gov/sites/default/files/EO13932-Guidance-Memo_508.pdf)).

<sup>6</sup> FlexJobs, *Top 100 Companies to Watch for Remote Jobs in 2022* (2022) (online at [www.flexjobs.com/blog/post/top-100-companies-for-remote-jobs-in-2022/](http://www.flexjobs.com/blog/post/top-100-companies-for-remote-jobs-in-2022/)).

market, 87% of employees who are offered the option to telework take advantage of the opportunity.<sup>7</sup>

## **II. HEARING PURPOSE**

The purpose of the hearing is to examine steps the Biden Administration is taking to adapt to changes in work-life culture and ensure the federal government remains competitive in talent recruitment.

## **III. WITNESSES**

### **Kiran A. Ahuja**

Director

Office of Personnel Management

### **Jason S. Miller**

Deputy Director for Management

Office of Management and Budget

Staff contacts: Wendy Ginsberg, Nick Dunard, Annaliese Yukawa, and Brian Maney at (202) 225-5051.

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<sup>7</sup> McKinsey, *Americans Are Embracing Flexible Work – and They Want More of It* (June 23, 2022) (online at [www.mckinsey.com/industries/real-estate/our-insights/americans-are-embracing-flexible-work-and-they-want-more-of-it](http://www.mckinsey.com/industries/real-estate/our-insights/americans-are-embracing-flexible-work-and-they-want-more-of-it)).