Hiring and/or Admissions Policies for University/Organization

This is what was found by USGS PSWs at U.S. Geological Survey on Hiring and/or Admissions Policies, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve.

Note: We acknowledge this information is not always accessible to students and even staff. If you do not have access to this information, please reflect on your own experience and outline what admissions and/or hiring should be like to foster a diverse and inclusive community.

- What EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) statement\(^1\) is included in a standard job or admissions advertisement? Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available\(^2\)?
  - Equal Employment Opportunity Policy
    - “The United States Government does not discriminate in employment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy and gender identity), national origin, political affiliation, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, genetic information, age, membership in an employee organization, retaliation, parental status, military service, or other non-merit factor.”
  - Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) for federal employees & job applicants
- Reasonable Accommodation Policy
  - Federal agencies must provide reasonable accommodation to applicants with disabilities where appropriate. Applicants requiring reasonable accommodation for any part of the application process should follow the instructions in the job opportunity announcement. For any part of the remaining hiring process, applicants should contact the hiring agency directly. Determinations on requests for reasonable accommodation will be made on a case-by-case basis.
  - A reasonable accommodation is any change to a job, the work environment, or the way things are usually done that enables an

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5. https://www.brandeis.edu/diversity/dei-recruitment-hiring/rubric-for-evaluating-diversity-statements.html
individual with a disability to apply for a job, perform job duties or receive equal access to job benefits.

CDF Under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, federal agencies must provide reasonable accommodations when:

- An applicant with a disability needs an accommodation to have an equal opportunity to apply for a job.
- An employee with a disability needs an accommodation to perform the essential job duties or to gain access to the workplace.
- An employee with a disability needs an accommodation to receive equal access to benefits, such as details, training, and office-sponsored events.

CDF You can request a reasonable accommodation at any time during the application or hiring process or while on the job. Requests are considered on a case-by-case basis.

CDF Learn more about disability employment and reasonable accommodations or how to contact an agency.

- Where are advertisements posted or sent? Are there other strategies for reaching applicants for hiring and/or admissions, e.g. job fairs, showcases?
  - USAJobs
  - USGS Water cluster hire tried a different strategy for hiring, posting on Twitter, blog posts, hosting Q&A sessions, and advertising on job boards such as Geoscience Alliance, Diversify Tech, etc.. [https://waterdata.usgs.gov/blog/hiring-spring-2021/](https://waterdata.usgs.gov/blog/hiring-spring-2021/)
  - There is an email address you can send job postings to and they’ll send to diverse applicant pools. USGS Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity is still working on filling out this pool (gs_deo_recruitment@usgs.gov)
  - USGS Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity visits job fairs as one part of their outreach initiatives, with a focus on diversity.
  - USGS Centers / Divisions are in charge of their own job posting / advertisement. Some job ads are posted on scientific society boards, social media, and various job boards with some targeting diverse societies and audiences.
Working document on "Applying to a job in the U.S. Federal Government with a graduate degree"

- What are the requirements for an applicant, e.g. letters of recommendations, fees/test scores/grades? Is providing any of these a potential barrier that could be further lowered or removed? Are there any problematic questions asked?
  - Transcripts and Resume are required for most job postings.
  - Cover letters are often optional
  - Some job postings have questions in addition to the required documents that are self assessment of activities/knowledge related to the job ad. Often applicants do not rate themselves the highest possible on these questions which can mean that their application does not pass the initial Human Resources screening. Other times, applicants rate themselves as high as possible but are actually not qualified for the position. Our group discussed that this is often the part of the application process that is most discriminatory. Often the government job application process is opaque and confusing and applicants who successfully navigate the application process often know someone who holds a government position and can help them navigate the process. This discriminates against applicants who do not know government employees which will likely follow racial, educational, and socioeconomic divisions.
  - Federal jobs must fit into a job series which have pre-defined specific requirements that need to be met such as educational requirements
    - Rigid requirements prevent hiring from a diverse pool of applicants.
    - Sometimes, course work required for a job series qualification can be ambiguous depending on the name of the course from the applicant. It is best to submit an additional document explaining how you are qualified for a specific job series based on your education, but again, most applicants will not realize that this is a good strategy unless you know someone who can help you navigate the application process
  - There are some resources available that can help navigate this process. For example, this document [https://docs.google.com/document/d/15ylkL0glAf5vlrS5-T87MJoO9x52ugroV_9acWQmn6A/edit#heading=h.oiyvnenfqbic](https://docs.google.com/document/d/15ylkL0glAf5vlrS5-T87MJoO9x52ugroV_9acWQmn6A/edit#heading=h.oiyvnenfqbic)

- How are applicants/applications evaluated? Is that process and/or rubric public? What kind of biases are introduced in this process and what strategies are used to address these, e.g. removing applicant names?
  - Very few of our Pod members have been involved with hiring for USGS, and we represent a narrow portion of the USGS so are only speaking from our own experience with this portion of the application review.


OPM memo on “Improving Federal Hiring through the Use of Effective Assessment Strategies to Advance Mission Outcomes”

First step:
  ■ There is an initial Human Resources screening process that evaluates applicants based on educational requirements and key words in their CV / Resume that match key words in the job posting. Often the human resources employee evaluating the applicants are not subject-matter experts and there is an optional process for adding a subject-matter expert to this first evaluation step. We are unclear whether Human Resources uses a rubric, but there are competency models for different job series and grade levels (see here - https://www.doi.gov/pmb/hr/competency-models). Additionally, we assume they do and have to follow guidelines for educational requirements / key words. Once HR has evaluated the entire applicant pool, they send a certified list of applicants to the hiring manager, who is often either a senior scientist, center director, or branch chief.

Second step(s):
  ■ The hiring manager evaluates the certified list of applicants from HR. This process will vary from hiring manager to hiring manager and to our knowledge, there is not a standardized rubric for evaluating at this stage nor are there requirements for how many people and who are evaluating the applicants. Biases that could be introduced at this step include racial, gender, and geographic biases based on the hiring manager and/or applicant reviewers. Our group thinks there should be a diverse review panel for both the application reviews and any interviews that are conducted. A standardized rubric for evaluating would also be good but may be difficult to create a single rubric for all of USGS – rubrics for each region / center / office is encouraged.

- Who is on selection committees and who makes the final decisions? Who interacts with the applicants?
Human Resources evaluates the applicants first. The Human Resources employees who evaluate the applicants will vary from region to region within the USGS.

The hiring manager makes the final decision after receiving the certification list from HR and conducting interviews. There may be several people who interview the applicants during the evaluation stage, which will likely include the hiring manager and other potential co-workers in the interview.

- Has your hiring and/or admissions process been evaluated by outside consultants? What is the process for changing it?
  - We are unsure about this but assume that the hiring process has been evaluated by outside consultants based on the number of people employed and long history of government employment.
  - In some cases, centers or regions within the USGS have hired outside consultants to evaluate their hiring process and recommend modes of action for hiring for diversity and inclusion. There can be significant changes made at the center / region level that work within the constraints of hiring within the government—e.g. cluster hires, flexible job series, better advertisement for jobs.

- Has your university or company implemented or considered strategies like cohort hiring, mentoring, dual career support and partner hires, re-envisioning your work culture, or other considerations outlined in “Leveraging Promising Practices”6?
  - Yes, in some cases. Some USGS centers have implemented cluster hires or allow for flexible duty stations, including full-time remote work.
  - There are employee resource groups within USGS that can provide mentorship but the mentorship strategy (or lack thereof) within a center / division will vary a lot.
  - Occasionally, there are relocation, recruitment, or retention incentives that can be used to recruit or retain employees.