CLIMATE 21 PROJECT TRANSITION MEMO

Attracting and Hiring Climate Change Talent

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Transition Memo

Attracting and Hiring Climate Change Talent

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This memo is part of the **Climate 21 Project**, which taps the expertise of more than 150 experts with high-level government experience, including nine former cabinet appointees, to deliver actionable advice for a rapid-start, whole-of-government climate response coordinated by the White House and accountable to the President.

The full set of Climate 21 Project memos is available at climate21.org.

CLIMATE **21** PROJECT

Transition Memo

Attracting and Hiring Climate Change Talent

Executive Summary

As the next Administration seeks to tackle the wide ranging and growing challenges associated with climate change, the need for an effective and efficient federal government workforce has never been clearer.

Over the last four years, staff working in key roles across the federal government on issues related to climate change have been demoralized, sidelined or have left their roles all together.

As new leadership teams take the helm, they will inherit a workforce that has experienced a prolonged, systematic assault to disable effective capacities, demoralize its highly knowledgeable and dedicated staff, and undercut its own legal authorities. New leadership will need to both communicate a compelling long-term vision on combating climate change and quickly motivate, activate, recruit, hire, and retain dedicated career leadership and expert staff to supply analyses, ideas, and approaches to achieve that vision.



Achieving ambitious climate goals will require rebuilding capacity across federal departments and agencies, which means the new administration must mobilize existing federal employees and forge working relationships with key career employees on the agency and departmental level who will help facilitate hiring and recruitment efforts. Federal agencies and the Executive Office of the President will need to quickly assess vacancies, determine roles that will need to be created to support new initiatives, and generate targeted recruitment plans to attract top-tier talent.

The new administration will need to understand and avail itself of the full range of hiring authorities that exist across the federal government and the tools that will allow it to bring in talent for both the short and long term. Given the diversity of agency-specific needs and authorities, the transition and landing teams should also prioritize building a strong foundational understanding of effective hiring authorities and effective, respectful working relationships with agency hiring teams that can be deployed as newly minted political appointees work with existing career federal employees to revitalize and restock the government's climate change workforce.

This memo outlines how the next administration can bring in new talent in the both the short and long-term, as well as some immediate efforts that can be undertaken to identify and fill talent gaps, mobilize current employees and establish cross-government coordination in relation to hiring practices to progress the Climate 21 Project's mission.

CLIMATE **21** PROJECT

Attracting and Hiring Climate Change Talent

MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW

• Forge partnerships with key HR staff in relevant agencies and departments. Establish strong working relationships with career staff who facilitate hiring activities.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Map vacancies and design workforce plans. Each agency should identify its talent needs and develop workforce plans that align with their climate change priorities.
- **Recruitment.** Agencies should proactively and effectively find the talent that aligns with their needs.
- **Mobilize and empower a demoralized workforce.** The next administration should take steps to re-energize and empower the existing workforce.
- Appoint an Office of Personnel Management (OPM) director that considers climate change a crisis. A supportive OPM director can help expedite the hiring process across the government.
- **Rehire former and retired federal employees.** Certain former and retired employees can be rehired quickly and play an integral role in getting programs off the ground quickly.
- Focus on the hiring process. Addressing choke points in the hiring process itself is an important aspect of making sure agencies are able to quickly bring on new talent.

KEY STRUCTURAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

- **"Surge" hiring authorities.** Agencies have a range of authorities to hire in the short-term and to acquire specialized staff outside of the traditional civil service process, including through direct hires, the Intergovernmental Personnel Act, rehiring former and retired career officials, and certain Schedule A and Schedule B hiring authorities, among other mechanisms.
- Long-term hiring authorities. To rebuild the federal government for the long term, agencies should look to the competitive service process and to special programs for recent graduates, including the Presidential Management Fellowship.

CROSS-CUTTING PRIORITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS

• Cross governmental coordination around hiring and recruitment. Climate change related agencies and departments should establish working relationships across the government around hiring and recruiting.

MISCELLANEOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

- Focus on diversity. Federal departments and agencies should develop comprehensive strategies to drive and integrate diversity and inclusion practices with a particular focus on areas where underrepresentation may exist.
- Address burrowing. Some of the previous administration's political appointees may now be in career positions that would allow them to undermine climate related activities. Steps should be taken to understand where these individuals are.

Management, Budget, and Structure

Each department and agency has its own hiring and recruitment teams, and it is impossible to get a full picture of current or future vacancies before the transition and/or agency landing teams make contact in the transition period. Both the landing teams and new agency leadership should prioritize building effective working relationships with human resources staff in departments and agencies to understand the positions that need to be filled, where new positions need to be created, and what authorities are best to recruit and hire new staff.

While the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) supports human resources and employee management services across the federal government, there is no centralized hiring entity or process. OPM can grant authorities to help expedite certain types of hires and can provide support in other ways, but most agencies have their own set of hiring and recruitment operations. In addition, there is no easy way to map current or future vacancies prior to obtaining a foothold in each relevant agency. Therefore, the process of identifying current and future openings must begin immediately following the election and continue on a rolling basis.

Prior to understanding key hiring authorities that the next administration will have at its disposal and how they can be most effectively used, as outlined in this memo, it is also important to understand some important aspects of the hiring and workforce management processes. Expediting the hiring process and hiring the right talent goes beyond simply understanding how each authority can be used. It also requires close collaboration with current hiring managers and human resource staff and a deliberate focus on breaking down barriers and improving the hiring process.

• Forge partnerships with key HR staff in relevant agencies and departments. Political appointees and the initial landing teams that are deployed across the government should work collaboratively with agencies and department career staff to understand the most effective hiring authorities and practices for each agency, track and improve the hiring process for vital positions, create recruitment strategies and map current and future vacancies.

The career staff in each agency will be best positioned to help facilitate hiring and recruitment needs and as such, it is important to bring them into the process and establish strong working relationships with these individuals early. In order to do this, the first order of business should be to identify and engage with the key players within each relevant agency. While some of the offices vary by name, there are generally three places to start this work, which should be expanded based on initial conversations, including:

Assistant Secretary for Management and Administration or equivalent position. This position is typically political, so the transition and/or landing teams should engage with the most senior remaining official. This office provides leadership for departmental administration, including human resource policy, information technology, and departmental operations.

Human resources departments. This is the office within agencies and departments that drafts position descriptions, engages in outreach activities to achieve a quality candidate pool, and assesses candidates to determine those that are best-qualified for the positions being filled. It also conducts hiring activities including soliciting, receiving, and evaluating applications, communicating with applicants, advising on interview and reference check processes, making job offers, gathering paperwork and other activities.

Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO). These individuals and their staff are responsible for:

- Setting the workforce development strategy of the agency;
- Assessing workforce characteristics and future needs based on the agency's mission and strategic plan;
- Aligning the agency's human resources policies and programs with the organization's mission, strategic goals, and performance outcomes; and
- Developing and advocating a culture of continuous learning to attract and retain employees with superior abilities.

2 Key Opportunities and Recommendations

Work to rebuild and improve morale among the federal climate change workforce should begin immediately. During the transition period, agency landing teams should work to map vacancies and build relationships with human resources officers to design workforce plans for each agency, so the new administration can move quickly to begin staffing up. During the transition period, a new OPM Director should be nominated who recognizes climate change as an urgent crisis and who will be a strong partner to federal agencies looking for additional flexibility and resources to hire the staff they need. The new administration should prioritize internal communications that will energize remaining career staff and demonstrate that they are a trusted, valued, and essential part of the new administration's climate plans.

The federal government's climate change workforce has been gutted and demoralized, which creates challenges for reinvigorating old programs or launching new initiatives. However, this also represents an opportunity to bring in a newly energized wave of workers who can drive the federal climate agenda forward well into the future. In order to help accomplish this goal, new agency leaders should find ways to improve the hiring process, identify staffing needs, and actively recruit new talent.

• Map vacancies and design workforce plans. Climate change-related agencies and departments must assess the skills that their employees currently possess, determine how those skills align with the work that needs to be done today and into the future, forecast attrition, and identify current vacancies so that recruiting and hiring decisions can be made accordingly.

Based on these assessments, each agency should develop workforce plans that align with their climate policy priorities. These plans should spell out how many employees are needed in each type of role, identify gaps that must be filled in the short and long-term and determine what skills the workforce must possess in order to be successful.

As part of the workforce planning process, agencies should review the talent that they have and consider whether it is being used most effectively to address existing or new climate change related programs. In addition to hiring new talent, it may also be prudent to reshuffle existing staff in order to align their skills, interest and talent with climate priorities.

• **Recruitment.** The human capital needed to address climate change will be vast. In order to fill talent gaps and recruit the next generation of workers dedicated to addressing climate change, it will take more than simply posting a job opening on USAJobs and hoping top-tier talent applies. Agencies and federal leaders must make it a priority to proactively find the talent that they need.

Climate teams should push for the most expedient path for evaluating and onboarding talent, but it is also important for agencies to strategically identify talent pools and recruit more effectively and efficiently by being proactive, promoting their brand, keeping in touch with former employees, and targeting young people. Some tactics that the next administration should consider deploying to recruit new talent include, but are not limited to:

• *Call to action and public service from the top.* A vital aspect of recruiting new talent into the government or encouraging those who left to return is to send a powerful message from the White House and other government leaders that addressing climate change is a top priority. In announcing

new initiatives or the restoration of old programs, the next administration should make it clear that they are committed to the cause and need the hard work and ingenuity of the American people to help. It should be made clear that the federal government is the place to work if you want to confront climate change and that an urgent action is needed.

- *Relationships with colleges, universities, and research institutions.* Agencies should proactively seek to build relationships with higher education and research institutions as a means to showcase their work around climate change and attract qualified candidates. Tapping into these institutions is an important way to hire the next generation of leaders into the federal government and maintain a pipeline of young, educated, and energized talent.
- *Collaborate with existing organizations working to recruit talent.* Agencies should utilize existing resources like LinkedIn, <u>Handshake</u>, and the <u>Call to Serve Network</u> at the *Partnership for Public Service*, among others, to find and hire new talent.
- Leverage formal and informal networks of former and current government employees. As discussed in greater detail in the section on hiring authorities below, one of the quickest ways to get talent back into the federal workforce is to rehire certain former and retired career employees. One effective way to attract and recruit those employees is to work through both formal and informal networks of former federal workers. There is a patchwork of formal networks of alumni for a number of key climate agencies, including the Department of Energy and Department of Interior, that can be used for this purpose.
- **Mobilize and empower a demoralized workforce.** It is well documented that over the last four years career officials and employees working on climate change have been undercut, sidelined, and forced out of the government. While it may be assumed that they will be invigorated should the next administration make it clear that climate change is a priority, incoming leaders should also take deliberate steps to re-energize and empower them.
 - *Message and call to action from the White House.* The next administration should speak directly to the workforce and let them know that it will embrace the science behind climate change and that the expertise, knowledge, and ingenuity of current employees is valued, needed, and appreciated. The message should also include a call to action that challenges the workforce to meet the moment and confront climate change aggressively.
 - *Message from agency and departmental leadership.* Newly placed political appointees at the head of each relevant agency and department must also make it clear that they are committed to tackling climate change. They should echo the message from the White House and engage more directly and more regularly with staff though town halls, all-hands meetings, and other communications channels starting on day one.
- Appoint an OPM director who considers climate change a crisis. Hiring an OPM director who considers climate change an urgent crisis can help expedite the hiring process across the government by providing additional hiring authorities, such as Direct-Hire Authority (described in section 3), as well as by providing a range of different types of support to agencies throughout the hiring process. For example, according to news reports, the Department of Veterans Affairs has been able to drastically cut down its hiring timeline and bring in a large cadre of new workers in part by using the Direct-Hiring authority it was granted by OPM due to COVID-19. This same model could be used for hiring climate policy talent across the government.
- **Rehire former and retired federal employees.** As discussed in more detail below, there are specific hiring authorities that give departments and agencies the ability to quickly reinstate certain former and retired employees without application of the competitive hiring process. It would be prudent to make this an early priority. Many of the individuals who left the government under the previous administration will be highly

motivated to come back and will have valuable expertise and an understanding of how the government functions. They can be integral in getting new programs off the ground as well as recruiting and hiring the next generation of climate change leaders.

• Focus on the hiring and staffing process. According to the recent Partnership for Public Service report, <u>A Time for Talent: Improving Federal Recruiting and Hiring</u>, "The federal government has long struggled to attract the talent it needs, handicapped in part by a General Schedule pay system that makes it difficult to compete with the private sector. Too often, the applicant experience is miserable, plagued by confusing job announcements, a USAJobs platform that is difficult to use, and a cumbersome hiring process that can take months to complete. Even after collecting resumes, agencies rely too frequently on outdated methods to evaluate candidates, causing them to overlook the most qualified."

These are challenges that can undermine an agency's ability to attract and onboard top-tier talent. Political teams should work in tandem with career hiring and recruiting staff to address these challenges in order to expedite the process. Career officials are experts in the hiring process because they understand where the choke points are for their particular agency and can serve as a partner to political staff in addressing these issues. Broadly, to address some of these challenges, agencies can focus on creating a better experience for applicants, tracking the progress of hiring for key positions, drafting better job descriptions, using innovative techniques to identify who is most qualified, and looking inward for the next generation of talent.

However, not all hiring issues are the same for every agency. For example, the internal incentive structure at the State Department does not attract and may even actively dissuade top-tier Foreign Service Officers into climate change related lines of work. State Department leadership could make fundamental changes to how promotion and career-enhancing decisions are made as a means to attract top level Foreign Service Officer talent into climate change related work.

The State Department could also elevate the seniority of the overseas posts that manage climate change related portfolios. As it stands, many State Department Foreign Service Officers working on climate change issues overseas are placed in positions that are less senior than their foreign counterparts. This not only communicates a lack of commitment to climate change to our partners, it also means that senior and well-qualified Foreign Service Officers are not working these issues for the United States abroad.

3 Key Structural and Organizational Opportunities

The new administration should avail itself of the full range of hiring authorities available, both to "surge" staff to meet critical needs and to hire long-term and permanent career staff. Surge authorities include making political appointments, using direct-hire authorities, petitioning OPM for additional direct-hire authorities, re-hiring separated or retired career staff, and using the Intergovernmental Personnel Act and other authorities to temporarily hire experts. There are also 122 agency-specific authorities allowing for Schedule A appointments of certain specialist positions, and 36 agency-specific Schedule B appointment authorities; OPM could create additional exceptions in these categories as well. In addition, hiring preferences exist for veterans, spouses of military personnel, returning Peace Corps and AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers, and people with severe disabilities. In contrast, the vast majority of permanent hires must go through the Competitive Service process, although some programs for recent graduates, including the Presidential Management Fellowships, can also be used to recruit long-term career staff.

HIRING AUTHORITIES

As the next administration seeks to staff up quickly to address the urgent challenges associated with climate change, it should consider both short and long-term pathways to bring talent into the government. On the front end, in order to get programs up and running quickly, a new administration will need to conduct a surge in hiring to restock crucial vacancies and bolster depleted agencies with talent in a broader range of areas. For this effort, it is important to understand some of the most versatile and efficient authorities available. Simultaneously and over the long term, the administration will also need to find ways to institutionalize climate change programs and attract and hire the next generation of leaders who can carry climate initiatives forward well into the future.

This section outlines key hiring authorities that should be considered for both surge and long-term hiring. Given the vast diversity of needs and aspects of government involved in climate change policies and programs, it is important to understand from current human resource staff which authorities and hiring processes work best for each agency. As mentioned above, proactive, collaborative and early engagement with key career hiring staff is an important aspect of meeting the next administration's climate change talent needs.

"Surge" hiring authorities

This section outlines some hiring authorities that would allow the next administration to bring in talent quickly.

• <u>Political appointees</u>. The quickest and most well understood way for the next administration to bring in talent is through the political appointment process. These individuals will drive the next administration agenda and coordinate hiring with career officials across the government.

Overall, there are four main categories of politically appointed positions: (1) Presidential Appointments with Senate confirmation (PAS), (2) Presidential Appointments without Senate confirmation (PSs), (3) political appointees to the Senior Executive Service (SES), and (4) Schedule C political appointees. Persons in SES and Schedule C positions are typically appointed by PAS and PA appointees rather than by the President. However, all appointments to SES and Schedule C posts must be reviewed and approved by the Executive Office of the President.

- <u>Direct-hire authority</u>. Direct-hire authority is a policy that allows agencies to go outside the traditional civil service hiring process to fill vacancies when there is a critical hiring need or there is a shortage of qualified candidates after going through the standard process. This authority can be used to quickly fill climate change related roles if agencies use an existing government-wide direct-hire authority or receive approval from OPM for certain positions or groups of positions. OPM could also issue new government-wide direct-hire authorities that could be utilized by a swath of agencies. It is important to note that Senior Executive Services roles are excluded. Agencies can receive direct-hire authority in two ways:
 - (1) An agency may submit a written request to OPM for specific positions; or
 - (2) OPM may decide independently that a "severe shortage of candidates" or a "critical hiring need" exists for specific positions in some or all locations and issue authority either government-wide or for specific agencies and/or locations.

While some of the current government-wide direct-hire authorities could be used for climate change related matters, OPM could also expand this list in certain areas to help agencies avoid having to submit individual requests. OPM posts government-wide direct-hire authorities to its <u>website</u>. Some of these could immediately be used to onboard climate change staff include:

- Economist
- Biological Science
- Fishery Biologist
- Civil and General Engineers
- Physical Sciences

Some agencies may have applied for and received approval for direct-hire authorities that may be helpful as well. However, there is no publicly available list of all of these authorities and their expiration dates. Therefore, incoming political staff should engage with existing career staff to understand current direct-hire authorities that may be useful and what should be requested from OPM. More on direct-hire authority can be found <u>here</u>.

• **Reinstatement of former employees with prior career service**. Agencies may reinstate certain former federal employees without going through the competitive process if they have previously held a career or career-conditional appointment. There is no time limit on reinstatement eligibility for those who have veterans' preference, or have acquired career tenure by completing three years of substantially continuous creditable service.

If the former employee does not have veterans' preference or did not acquire career tenure, they may be reinstated within three years after the date of their separation. For these individuals, reinstatement eligibility may be extended by certain activities that occur during the three-year period after separation from their last career-conditional appointment.

- <u>Reemployment of Civilian Retirees to Meet Exceptional Employment Needs</u>. Agencies may bring back recently retired experts to help with specific needs. Under certain circumstances, agencies may offer a waiver of the salary offset rules that would normally apply in order to re-employ or retain a civilian retiree for an emergency hiring need; a shortage due to severe recruiting difficulty; a need to retain a uniquely qualified individual for a specific project; and other nonemergency, unusual circumstances. To be eligible, the annuitant's appointments must be limited to one year or less and could be extended for an additional year.
- Experts and consultants. Agencies may appoint experts and consultants on a temporary basis (i.e., not to exceed one year) or an intermittent basis (i.e., without a regularly scheduled tour of duty). These employees are not covered by the standard provisions related to appointments in the competitive service, position classification, or General Schedule pay setting, and so could be used to add capacity relatively quickly.

Per OPM, an "expert" is a person who is specially qualified by education and experience to perform difficult and challenging tasks in a particular field beyond the usual range of achievement of competent persons in that field. A "consultant" is a person who can provide valuable and pertinent advice generally drawn from a high degree of broad administrative, professional, or technical knowledge or experience. When using this appointment, the expert or consultant cannot perform managerial or supervisory work.

• Veterans' Appointments

- *Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA)*. Using this authority, agencies can hire different types of veterans using noncompetitive appointments leading to conversion to career or career-conditional employment. A veteran can be converted to a career-conditional appointment in the competitive service after two years of satisfactory service. Agencies can non-competitively appoint an eligible veteran if they:
- Served during a war or are in receipt of a campaign badge for service in a campaign or expedition;
 - > Are a disabled veteran;
 - > Are in receipt of an Armed Forces Service Medal (includes the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal) for participation in a military operation; or
 - > Are a recently separated veteran (within three years of discharge), AND separated under honorable conditions (this means an honorable or general discharge).

Agencies may also use VRA to fill temporary (not to exceed one year) or term (more than one year but not to exceed four years) positions. Veterans appointed to temporary or term positions under VRA cannot be converted to the competitive service after two years.

- *Veterans with a 30 Percent or more disability.* This can be used for noncompetitive appointments leading to conversion to career or career conditional employment of an eligible disabled veteran who has a compensable service-connected disability of 30 percent or more. Initial appointment must be a temporary appointment of more than 60 days or a term appointment. An agency may convert an employee to permanent status at any time after initial temporary or term period.
- Noncompetitive hiring authority for certain military spouses. Certain military spouses are eligible to be noncompetitively appointed for a temporary, term, or permanent job. Eligibility for spouses is two years from the date of the service member's permanent change of station orders. Spouses of service members who are 100 percent disabled or who were killed while on active duty have lifetime eligibility starting from the date of the documentation verifying the service member's disability or death. Candidates must qualify for the job.
- Hiring people with severe physical disabilities, psychiatric disabilities, and intellectual disabilities (Schedule A). This authority is used to appoint persons with severe physical disabilities, psychiatric disabilities, and intellectual disabilities. Such individuals may qualify for conversion to permanent status after two years of satisfactory service. Severe physical disabilities include but are not limited to blindness, deafness, paralysis, missing limbs, and epilepsy. To use this non-competitive process, documentation of the disability is required.
- Intergovernmental Personnel Act. The Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) helps agencies access expertise from outside the federal government. It provides for temporary assignments of personnel between the federal government and state and local governments; certain colleges and universities; Indian tribal governments; federally funded research and development centers; and other eligible organizations.

Agencies do not need OPM approval to make assignments under the IPA authority. Federal agencies interested in using the IPA authority simply enter into a written agreement. Agencies may enter into IPA assignments on a reimbursable or non-reimbursable basis. This means they may be cost-neutral to federal agencies. Whether an IPA assignment is reimbursable is determined by the agency and entity involved in the assignment. Assignment agreements can be made for up to two years, and may be intermittent, part-time,

or full-time. The agency head, or his or her designee, may extend an assignment for an additional two years when the extension will be to the benefit of both organizations.

- <u>Returning Peace Corps and AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteers</u>. Agencies can tap into the pool of individuals who want to continue public service after serving as a Peace Corps and AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteers. These individuals are awarded one year of noncompetitive eligibility. An agency must have an open, classified position and the candidate must meet minimum qualifications. Federal agencies may extend the eligibility period for up to three years if, after completion of service, a candidate:
 - Served in the military;
 - Studied at a recognized institution of higher learning; or
 - Was involved in another activity which in the agency's view warrants an extension.
- <u>Schedule A and B appointments</u>. These appointments are part of the <u>Excepted Service</u> because they consist of positions that are specifically excepted from the competitive service (most federal employees are in the <u>Competitive Service</u>) either by statute, the President, or by OPM, and that are not in the Senior Executive Service.

Vacancies in the Excepted Service in the executive branch are required to be filled in the same manner as the competitive service; however, OPM established procedures to fulfill this requirement while still providing much greater flexibility. For example, agencies are not required to post an announcement on USAJobs or use OPM-generated minimum qualifications. These positions are not subject to pay and classification rules of the competitive service.

- Schedule A appointments are considered "impracticable to examine". They are used to appoint specific position types such as attorneys, chaplains, physicians; when there is a critical hiring need or the position is in a remote location; and to hire disabled applicants. As of 2016, there were <u>122 agency-unique Schedule A hiring authorities</u>.
- Schedule B appointments are "not practicable to hold a competitive examination". Schedule B appointees must meet the qualification standards for the job. As of 2016, there were <u>36 agency-unique</u> <u>Schedule B hiring authorities</u>.

OPM can grant Schedule A or B authority on an agency-by-agency basis upon request. Upon specific authorization by OPM, agencies may make appointments under this section to positions which are not of a confidential or policy-determining character, and which are not in the Senior Executive Service, for which it is impracticable to hold open competition or to apply usual competitive examining procedures.

Civil Service Rule VI (5 CFR 6.1) requires OPM to publish notice of exceptions granted under Schedule A, B, and C (political position). A consolidated notice of all agency-specific excepted authorities, approved by OPM, under Schedule A, B, and C (political appointees), must be posted in the Federal Register and can be found <u>here</u>. This list is extensive and provides opportunities to onboard talent where appropriate and where vacancies exist. It includes positions in the White House, Office of Management and Budget, Council on Environmental Quality, National Security Council, Office of Science and Technology Policy, and Departments of State, Treasury, Justice, Interior and more. Many of these positions, however, are narrowly defined and may not fit climate change related activities, while others have more flexibility.

• Safe Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. § 300j-10). Provisions in the Safe Drinking Water Act provide authority to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to expedite the hiring of a small number of scientific, engineering, professional, legal and administrative positions within the EPA without regard to the civil service laws. According to an Inspector General's report, since 2009 the EPA has only made 119 appointments consistent with the authority provided by the Safe Drinking Water Act. Used in a targeted way, this could help give quick lift to EPA programs.

• <u>Clean Air Act</u>. EPA has the potential to creatively streamline certain hiring activities based on section 103(b) (8) of the Clean Air Act. This section authorizes activities of the Administrator in establishing research and development programs, including to "construct facilities, provide equipment, and employ staff as necessary to carry out this chapter."

Long-term hiring authorities

As the next administration works to quickly restock the workforce through some of the authorities outlined above, there are other avenues that should be used to more permanently hire the next generation of leaders, even though the hiring and recruiting process may take longer.

• **Competitive Service appointments.** This is the traditional method for making appointments to competitive service positions and requires adherence to Title 5 competitive examining requirements, in which hiring needs are filled through a competitive examining process that is open to the public. Most positions in the executive branch are in the competitive service, unless specifically excepted by statute, Executive Order, or by an OPM determination.

Agencies that wish to fill a position in the competitive service must generally offer all U.S. citizens and nationals the opportunity to compete in a public and open examination. The procedures that agencies must follow include (1) posting a vacancy announcement on USAJobs.gov, the federal jobs portal; (2) using minimum qualifications to determine who is qualified and eligible to be rated for an agency assessment; (3) formally assigning numerical ratings to qualified applicants and selecting among the top three candidates; (4) adhering to detailed procedures for giving veterans and certain family members of veterans priority consideration; and (5) hiring only from lists of candidates prepared by OPM or, if OPM has delegated this function to an agency, by the agency's own human resources (HR) office (formally called a "delegated examining unit").

As discussed in the "Focus on the Process" section above and below in the "Encourage cross governmental coordination around hiring and recruitment" section, there are ways to improve this process. <u>Veterans</u> <u>Preference</u> can also be considered as a way to speed up the Competitive Service hiring process.

- <u>Pathways Programs for students and recent graduates</u>. The Pathways Programs consist of the Presidential Management Fellows program, the internship program, and the recent graduate program. The programs provide a supplemental source of entry-level talent. Initial hiring is in the excepted service, but may lead to conversion to a permanent position in the competitive service.
 - *The Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program.* PMF is a leadership development program at the mid-level for advanced degree candidates. Agencies can hire highly qualified individuals from a variety of disciplines that have been selected as finalists. Finalists are pre-qualified at the GS-9 level, although agencies may initially appoint at the GS-9, GS-11, GS-12, or equivalent.
 - *Internship program.* To be eligible for this work experience program, students must be enrolled and seeking a degree on a full or half-time basis at an accredited educational institution. Students who successfully complete the internship program may be eligible for conversion to a permanent or term position.
 - *Recent graduate program.* To be eligible for this program, recent graduates must apply within two years of degree or certificate completion (except for certain eligible veterans). The Program lasts for one year (unless the training requirements of the position warrant a longer and more structured training program) and recent graduates may be converted to a permanent position (or, in some limited circumstances, a term appointment lasting 1-4 years).

4 Cross-Cutting Priorities and Relationships

- **Cross governmental coordination around hiring and recruitment.** There are career staff still at agencies who are ready to take the lead and be part of the climate fight, but they need to be encouraged to make climate a priority instead of something to keep under the radar. Career and political staff alike should be challenged to think outside the silos of their line offices, agencies, and departments, and to establish working relationships across the government around a range of government programs, including hiring and recruiting.
 - *Consider establishing an intergovernmental human resources department committee or council.* This could be a formal or informal entity that would bring together the human resource professionals in climate change related agencies to develop strategies and tactics focused on hiring and acquiring talent.

A couple of places where these human resource professionals could immediately collaborate include:

- > Interagency coordinated job fairs focused on climate change. All of the agencies involved in combating climate change should collaborate to hold job fairs that will expand the federal government's overall reach and allow for the sharing of applicants. A designated agency should take the lead on spearheading these job fairs, but all relevant agencies should attend and devise plans to showcase the important work they are doing and use their reach to attract potential talent to the event, and be prepared to share quality applicants with their interagency partners. The Department of Homeland Security has effectively used this approach in the past.
- > Candidate and applicant sharing—hiring multiple employees off a single job post. Working collaboratively and across human resource departments, climate change related agencies should draft and post job descriptions that can be used to hire multiple candidates for multiple agencies. While there may be some challenges in establishing this process on the front end, there is precedent and it could expedite the process significantly in the long term.
- > Lessons learned and best practices sharing. One of the major barriers to acquiring talent is the hiring process itself. From communicating with the candidates to drafting accurate and compelling job descriptions and the range of mechanics in between, some agencies are better than others. This committee could become a mechanism to share best practices related to hiring climate talent and to help streamline the process across agencies.

5 Miscellaneous Recommendations

- Focus on diversity. As the U.S. workforce continues to experience demographic shifts, federal departments and agencies should develop comprehensive strategies to drive and integrate diversity and inclusion practices with a particular focus on areas where underrepresentation may exist. Engaging in strategic outreach with diverse sources, such as diversity organizations, minority serving institutions, local or state governments, and affinity and employee resource groups, is key to building and sustaining diverse talent networks and diverse applicant pools before positions are advertised.
- Address burrowing. As new political leadership takes the helm of the federal government, they should be aware of current or former political appointees who have converted into career positions, a process known as burrowing. Now sitting in career positions, these individuals may have the ability to undermine climate related activities or could potentially leak sensitive information. OPM generates a quarterly report to oversight committees during presidential election years under the Presidential Transition Act that can be helpful in identifying these individuals. Incoming leaders should understand where these individuals are.