

OPM announces direct-hire for federal government STEM positions

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The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) announced a new direct hiring authority in various science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) positions in a memorandum issued by acting director Margaret Weichert to all federal agency heads on October 11. The memorandum is part of the larger President's Management Agenda released in March 2018, which establishes a long-term vision for modernizing the federal government's workforce.

According to the OPM website, federal agencies can use a direct-hire authority to fill vacancies when a critical hiring need or severe shortage of candidates exists. Direct-hire expedites the hiring process by eliminating traditional protocol specifications for rating and ranking applicants, giving preference for veterans, and following the "rule of three" procedure of providing specific reasons why none of the top three applicants are acceptable prior to considering other candidates. The new authorization will open positions to direct-hire in fields including biological science, fishery biology, and physical science, according to a copy of the memorandum obtained by FedSmith, a digital news service.

According to the memo, agencies will still be required to request an applicable pre-employment background investigation to establish whether candidates are suitable for federal employment. The memo states that the authority expires five years from the date of approval.

Sources: FedSmith; U.S. Office of Personnel Management; White House.
