Identifying and Analyzing the Hiring Process for the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration

By

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Bachelor of Science in Naval Architecture
United States Naval Academy, 2001

Submitted to the System Design and Management Program
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Science in Engineering and Management

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Abstract

This thesis utilizes ideas taken from different Systems Engineering modeling tools to model the hiring process for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration (VHA). This model is a guide for understanding the current state of the process and shows that inadequate Position Descriptions (PD) are not the primary reason why the VA cannot meet the 80 day window set forth by U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Additionally, the model can assist in identifying potential areas for reducing the overall process timeline and be used as a training tool to illustrate how the hiring process progresses. Existing models only show major steps in the process which can mask sources of delay, communication issues, and confusion. The developed model delves deeper into those major steps, showing individual sub-steps, accountability, timelines, and data flows. Data for the model was obtained by direct observations, interviews, analysis from data collected by the VHA, and documents released by the VA and OPM. When fully developed, the model allowed for the conduction of case studies on three different positions within VHA; these case studies illustrate that the inability to meet the hiring process timeline is only partially due to issues with the PD and that other factors (namely internal reviews and classification delays) have a significantly greater effect in the resulting timeline. The model itself and recommendations provided, such as establishing priorities, targeting specific areas of time delays, improving communication, and generating and providing access to knowledge can help the VHA to achieve a streamlined and compressed timeline.

Thesis Supervisor: Deborah J. Nightingale
Title: Professor of Practice of Aeronautics and Astronautics and Engineering Systems
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<td>Consolidated Classification Unit</td>
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<td>Chain of Command</td>
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<td>CPM:</td>
<td>Critical Path Method</td>
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<td>DSM:</td>
<td>Design Structure Matrix</td>
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<td>E2E</td>
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<td>General Schedule Pay Scale and Number</td>
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<td>HR:</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
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<td>HUD:</td>
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<td>ICOM:</td>
<td>Inputs, Controls, Outputs, and Mechanisms</td>
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<td>IDEF:</td>
<td>Integration Definition for Process Modeling</td>
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<tr>
<td>JOA:</td>
<td>Job Opportunity Announcement</td>
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<tr>
<td>KSA:</td>
<td>Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities</td>
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<td>OPM:</td>
<td>Office of Personnel and Management</td>
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<td>PD:</td>
<td>Position Descriptions</td>
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<td>PE:</td>
<td>Prospective Employee</td>
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<td>PSB:</td>
<td>Professional Standards Board</td>
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<td>SE:</td>
<td>Systems Engineering</td>
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<td>VA:</td>
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<td>VHA:</td>
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<td>VISN:</td>
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<td>VSM:</td>
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Biographical Note

Ethan Fiedel is an active duty Navy Lieutenant currently pursuing a degree in Naval Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, and Engineering and Management as prerequisites for subsequent assignment as an Engineering Duty Officer. His past assignments include sea and shore assignments attached to USS PROVIDENCE (SSN-719), Commander Submarine Squadron (COMSUBRON) 22, and Commander Task Force (CTF) 69.

Lieutenant Fiedel’s most recent assignments include Submarine Watch Officer for SIXTH FLEET. Previously, he was assigned as the Operations Officer for COMSUBRON 22. Other assignments include Communications Officer, Damage Control/Auxiliary Division Officer, Main Propulsion Assistant, and Electrical Officer onboard a nuclear powered submarine.

Lieutenant Fiedel is a graduate of the Prospective Nuclear Engineer Officer Course, Submarine Officer Basic Course, and the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Course. His awards and decorations include the Navy Commendation Medal, four Navy Achievement Medals, and the Submarine Warfare Qualification.

Lieutenant Fiedel graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 2001 with a Bachelor of Science Degree with Merit in Naval Architecture. This work completes the requirements for his Masters of Science in Engineering and Management from the Systems Design and Management Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
Acknowledgements

I would like to first thank my wife, Jennifer, who has endured the highs and lows of life by my side and brought me joy when I needed it the most; no person could give more and ask for less as she put her career second, withstood the late night returns and early morning departures.

This project would not have been possible without the support of the VA staffs at the VISN, Bedford, Brockton, and White River Junction care facilities. Despite their busy schedules and tireless work, the managers and staff were always willing to provide support.

Finally, I could not have completed this project without the support and guidance of my advisor, Professor Deborah Nightingale. Their donation of time and effort allowed me to complete this work in the leanest and most effective manners.
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Executive Summary

Introduction

This thesis combines mapping concepts from various Systems Engineering tools to model the hiring process for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration (VHA). The primary research objective is to identify the sub-processes and factors within the hiring process which inhibit the process from meeting the 80 hiring window stipulated by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management’s (OPM) End-to-End (E2E) Hiring Initiative. From the development and analysis of the model, recommendations were developed and are proposed to improve the overall state of the hiring process for the VHA.

Background and Analysis

As with many other government agencies, the VA’s hiring process currently is taking too long a time period; in many cases, the process, from development of the hiring package to bringing an individual on board, can take almost five months. In the case of the VA, Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), which could not bring staff onboard fast enough to meet the influx of Post 9/11 GI Bill applications, both the Veterans and VA employees suffered. With strong ties existing between MIT and the VHA organizations and facilities, the decision was made to model the hiring process for the VHA.

One of the beliefs proposed as the cause of the lengthy process is faulty or erroneous Position Descriptions (PD) generated by the managers. From the data in the PD’s, inaccurate and inadequate job advertisements would be drafted resulting in inappropriate and unqualified candidates applying; as no applicant meets the requirements, no applicant is selected for the position and the process would have to be repeated.
After a review of the hiring process, it was discovered that more than the PD’s prevented the hiring process from being completed in 80 days. Lengthy internal reviews prior to the packages reaching the Human Resources (HR) were found to be the most significant source of the process holdups; caused by both the number of reviews and periodicity of high level authorization reviews, the internal review process had the potential to add a month onto the hiring process. Medical examinations also resulted in lengthy delays; full physicals could require multiple trips to multiple facilities over an extended period of time. The number of handoffs of the job package was found to be large; for many of the positions over five separate entities and 20 separate handoffs were counted. Confusion about the process and communication issues resulted in package stagnation.

**The Process Modeling Tool (PMT)**

After identifying the delay factors listed above and reviewing the E2E Initiative model and Systems Engineering modeling tools, it was decided that none of the tools adequately displayed the issues discussed above. The high level layout and organization of the E2E Initiative map masked many of the handoffs between agencies and lacked the detail to model the actual time periods. IDEF0, Value Stream Mapping, and Critical Path Modeling individually lacked the ability to show the aforementioned issues; therefore, the PMT was developed as a compilation model.

**Case Study Results and Recommendations**

After completing the model, a series of case studies for three different positions (Clerk, Industrial Engineer, and Physical Therapist) was conducted. From the studies, it was determined that, primarily due to the causes above, meeting the 80 day window is unlikely for many of the hiring scenarios.

The recommendations developed for the hiring process were broken down into three categories: those that directly affect the process and can be implemented locally, those that directly affect the process and would require support and changes from the national level, and those that affect retention by improving the hiring process. Changes to nationally approved VA procedures and documentation would require high governmental permission as well as coordination with OPM; therefore, these recommendations were separated from those that could be conducted with local approval. The third category of recommendations is based within the hiring process, but has an effect on retention, not the hiring process itself.
The first category of recommendations consists of delegating or reorganizing internal hiring permissions and processes, coordinating medical screening, making available “Lessons Learned,” fully tracking the hiring process, and making tools like the developed model available to all staff. Many of the noticed delays in the process were due to internal reviews and re-reviews of the jobs. By delegating hiring authority, review steps within the process could be eliminated; by reorganizing the internal review process, unnecessary delays such as waiting for Director level boards can be minimized. Coordination of the various medical screening exams can significantly reduce the time to bring new staff on board and minimize both the candidates and VA’s expenditures and frustrations. Developing and making universally available the lessons learned from the process can save time in answering questions, eliminate time lost due to lack of communication, and minimize the resubmission of paperwork due to errors; currently, some “Lessons Learned” data exists, however, it is scattered among the “Discipline Only” accessible folders. Additionally, time is lost due to not all staff members being “on the same page;” many of the lower level staff, who are not involved in the hiring approval process, but are involved in the candidate entry process do not get any advance notice or data on newly recruited personnel resulting in further processing delays. As the hiring process has many alternative paths, tracking of the process generally begins once HR has custody of the package; this could be as much as two months after the process has already started; by modifying some of the locally developed forms, timeline data could be gathered from the start of the process for further analysis. Lastly, many of the staff are unfamiliar with the actual flow path of the job packages, mainly because no accurate model exists; currently, the only readily available model was the E2E Initiative which, as previously mentioned, hides many of the issues. By making models, like the one created here, available to all staff, the staff would understand where the packages are in the process and who to call with questions.

The second category of recommendations consists of structuring of national priorities, improving communication between organizations, and clarifying comments within the E2E Initiative. There is currently a priority conflict between the hiring process and budgeting; while the understanding exists that staff is needed for the various positions, the funding for the staff gets allocated towards other facility needs (e.g. maintenance). By directly allotting funds for specific positions, much of the internal budgetary juggling can be reduced. As was noted in the model, communication between the Services and the Delegated Examining Units (DEU) is limited; HR acts as the go-between. By enabling more communication between the Service and the DEU, the processing portion of the timeline will increase, but the quality and clarity of the advertisements could increase.
The final recommendation is geared towards the next revision of the E2E Initiative. The current version masks participants in steps and fails to detail the sub-steps involved resulting in inaccurate timeframes. By counting the Consolidated Classification Units (CCU) and DEU as part of HR, the E2E gives the impression that all of these groups are not only co-located, but their actions may even be conducted by the same person. As illustrated by the model, this is not the case. Additionally, with internal chain-of-command conducting reviews and approval on all job packages, stating that only the manager is involved is faulty. The additional handoffs between these reviewers and processors adds in additional time throwing off the listed times.

The third category consisted of one recommendation based on a concern of OPM: retention. It was discussed that, in certain cases, staff had been brought on board and then discovered the job wasn’t what they thought it would be. In reviewing the documentation on interviewing (part of the hiring process), no emphasis was placed on discussing with the candidate the actual day-to-day routine of the position. By spending time discussing what the job actually entails, the candidates may get a better feel as to the position and therefore, their longevity within that position.
Chapter 1: Introduction

This research applies the principles and tools of Program Management, Systems Engineering, and Enterprise Architecture to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration hiring process. The primary research objective is to identify and model the actual hiring process flow path in detail, determine the delays, inefficiencies, and reasons why the current, in-place hiring process cannot meet the timeline as set forth by the Office of Personnel and Management's End-to-End Hiring Initiative.

1.1: Organization of Thesis

This thesis contains six chapters: Introduction, Previous Efforts, Approach, Data, Case Studies, and Conclusions and Recommendations. The Introduction provides background on the hypothesis, the applicable parties, VA, goals, and tools and timelines for the project. Previous Efforts highlight two key factors: proof that the VA is making strides to improving the process and other academic work used as the basis for this research. The Approach chapter discusses the entering assumptions, how data was obtained, and how data was displayed. The fourth chapter, Data, is the walkthrough of the data obtained and focuses mostly on the current state and flow path of the hiring process. The Case Study chapter was added at the recommendation of the thesis' sponsors to show how the differences in the flow path and how the timeline can be affected by different types of jobs. The final chapter, Conclusions and Recommendations, details thoughts on how to improve the process and where future work can be done to further this research.

1.2: Organizations Involved

While the US Office of Personnel Management (OPM) does not fall within the VA’s Chain Of Command (COC), government agencies are responsible for following the guidelines set forth by OPM when hiring civil service members. It is therefore necessary to explain the responsibilities of each of these.

1.2.1: US Office of Personnel Management

OPM is an independent agency of the United States government that manages the civil service component of the federal government. (United States Office of Personnel Management, 2010) As such, they are the oversight for: (A New Day for Federal Service: Strategic Plan 2010-2015, 2010)
• Leading the way in making the Federal government the model employer and in doing so become the model agency

• Partnering with our stakeholders – Congress, unions and management groups, agencies, and the public – to develop and implement effective and relevant human resources solutions to build a high-performing workforce

• Advancing the President’s goal of recruiting, hiring and retaining the best and the brightest for Federal service

• Advising and assisting agencies on strategic human resources management

• Working with Congress and other stakeholders on developing effective compensation, work/life, and benefits packages

• Monitoring merit-based human resources practices to ensure all Federal employees operate in a fair and discrimination-free environment, promoting recruitment practices that help agencies draw from the rich diversity of the American workforce, recognizing multi-generational differences, and encouraging practices that provide a welcoming environment in the workplace

• Promoting effective and efficient human resources programs and practices across government through reform, interaction with stakeholders, and other forums

• Ensuring executive branch agencies’ accountability for compliance with the merit system principles, Federal law, and regulations, including veterans’ preference

• Ensuring the suitability, trustworthiness, and/or eligibility for a security clearance for Federal applicants, employees, appointees, active military personnel and contractor staff by conducting background investigations which are used as a basis for these determinations by Federal agencies

• Administering retirement, health benefits, long-term care and life insurance, dental and vision and flexible spending account programs for Federal employees, retirees, and their beneficiaries and maintaining the integrity of these programs

• Leading by example by becoming the change we want to see

        Hiring of Federal employees in any governmental agency therefore must be done so in accordance with OPM guidelines.
1.2.2: US Department of Veterans Affairs

The US Department of Veterans Affairs is a branch of the Federal government and holds one of the fifteen seats within the President's Cabinet. The full organizational chart is shown below in Figure 1:

![Organizational Chart of the VA](VA_Organizational_Chart, 2009)

Within the VA, there are three main branches: the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), and the National Cemetery Administration. In some cases each of the offices of the Administrations may be co-located geographically; however, there is no direct interaction as each Administration runs independently.

1.3: Motivations

The motivations for analyzing the argument were twofold: personal and professional. Within the personal aspect there were two sub-motivations; the first was that I was the 22 week case specified below. Having been forced to pay for my wife’s tuition out of pocket (as the system didn’t move fast enough to cover her expenses), I was unhappy. Having witnessed others who had applied to schools, been accepted, but couldn’t enroll because of the 1) delays in benefits and 2) lack of personal funds, was heartbreaking. Having witnessed those who couldn’t afford housing and food because of the delay in
benefits was horrifying; veterans had moved to the institution’s (in some cases very expensive) locations anticipating the benefits which were heavily delayed. It therefore became a personal goal to try and develop a solution which could uniformly minimize this problem. What hiring has to do with the distribution of benefits will be discussed in section 1.4.

The second personal aspect was OPM’s belief that the 80 day hiring timeline was feasible for all organizations. Having been a leader working at the deckplate level, I was most familiar with directives written at higher levels which, at those higher levels, invariably made perfect sense, but at the operational level were infeasible. This thesis provided me a chance to illustrate the fact that when making high level documents, the inputs of the plan executors must be heard as well.

The professional aspect is equally as important. The Engineering Duty Officer (EDO) Community (of which I am a member), is an organization that works heavily with the civilian sector of the Department of Defense. In some cases, EDO’s are assigned to command facilities where they are the sole military member overseeing and responsible for thousands of civilian employees. Having transferred to the EDO Community from the Submarine Warfare line, and not having past experiences working with civilian employees, I wanted to get some better understanding of how to employ the civilian workforce.

1.4: Background and Argument Identification

Prior to July 31, 2009, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), received approximately 50,000 applications per year for the educational benefits provided by the Montgomery GI Bill (Customer Support Supervisor, VBA, 2009). In 1984, the Montgomery GI Bill, a revamped version of the 1944 Servicemen’s Readjustment Act, was approved by Congress to continue to provide both housing and “educational benefits to [armed] services members.” (Montgomery GI Bill) Starting August 1, 2009, a new G.I. bill was put into place: the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill. This new bill provided “enhanced educational benefits that cover more educational expenses provide a living allowance, money for books and the ability to transfer unused educational benefits to spouses or children.” (Born of Controversy: The GI Bill of Rights) With benefits now extending to family members as well as service members, the number of applications to the VA surged; within the first three months of being active, over 250,000 applications had been received for the new bill’s benefits. (Customer Support Supervisor, VBA, 2009)

Unprepared for the influx, the VBA took significantly longer than normal to process all of the applications; the results of those delays were financial hardships on military/veteran families and even
academic repercussions. With the Montgomery GI Bill, “there was never any problem getting verification of enrollment forms.” Once the forms were received by the VA, receipt of funds by the institution could take approximately 30 to 90 days. (Grinch, 2009) By October 1, (60 days after the start of the new bill) only approximately 61,000 payments had been made (LaFlure, 2009). As was directly witnessed in two cases, it took 22 weeks and 26 weeks for the educational institutions to receive their funds; timeline approximations for the application submission to funding receipt are shown in Appendix A. Discussions with other service members yielded similar stories. The consequences of the delays ranged from minimal (i.e. monthly e-mails from institutions stating how much in tuition and late fees were owed) to severe: institutions not allowing students to enroll/return unless funding was provided. (Fiedel, 2009) Realizing that delays existed and the repercussions that came with the delays, the VA began issuing emergency or “advance pay” (up to $3,000) to over 170,000 veterans to cover living expenses. (LaFlure, 2009)

Initial discussions with VA staff members revealed that one of the issues behind this significant processing delay was the lack of manpower to process the influx of applications. Despite the Post 9/11 GI Bill being signed into effect over a year before, the manning levels were not adequate to process the unexpectedly high number of applications. This thought was reinforced by the Department’s Office of the Inspector General’s (OIG) report that “staffing issues contribute to VBA’s benefit processing challenges.” (General, 2009) Proof of this was clear from discussions with VBA Customer Service representatives who, by November, were only answering phone three days a week vice five days a week; for the other two days, the representatives were pulled to help process applications. (Fiedel, 2009)

Continued discussions hinted that it wasn’t that people didn’t want to work for the VA or the government, but the hiring process was so long, twisted, and torturous, that people couldn’t be hired fast enough. Every person subsequently interviewed discussed how lengthy and frustrating the process was and the VA was not alone in this problem. Other governmental organizations were showing similar time delays and frustrations in bringing staff on board; the Department of Defense had goals/targets to reduce the hiring process timeline down to 140 days by FY 2010. (Targets)

Among the first phone calls placed in researching this situation was to the oversight organization for governmental hiring: OPM. The focus of these discussions centered primarily on a single document: the End-to-End (E2E) Hiring Initiative. The E2E clearly outlined a timeline for the hiring process that could be accomplished in 80 calendar days. Further discussions with OPM revolved around the beliefs or rationale why this timeline wasn’t being met. One of the key beliefs brought forward was that the
delays in the process were caused by inadequately defined Position Descriptions (PD). With inadequate PD’s, the hiring process would progress, candidates would apply, and after reviews of applications and conduction of interviews, no candidate would be selected as the candidates were found to not have the required skill set; the subsequent result was that the process had to be repeated. In other cases, a candidate would be selected, hired, and shortly thereafter depart as the position wasn’t what they thought it would be.

Subsequent phone calls with VA staff agreed with this scenario, but also pointed in the opposite direction; while the PD’s held some accountability in the delays, it was the process itself that was infeasible in the 80 day window. From the VA perspective, with all of the various hand-offs, intermediate reviews, and additional required steps, the 80 day limit could not be achieved.

The two opposing beliefs formed the basis of this thesis’ argument: The cause of the lengthy time period to hire is the inadequacy of PD’s. If this is not the case, why is the time to hire so long?

1.5: Working with the Veterans Health Administration

As stated in 1.2.2, each branch of the VA operates independently of the others. While the first preference would have been to work directly with the VBA, the executors of the Post 9/11 GI Bill, the most readily available ties between MIT and the VA were with the VHA. Several other on-going research projects had opened doors of communication between the various VHA hospitals and administrative staffs located in the vicinity of MIT. Therefore, the decision was made early on to study the hiring process within the VHA; additionally, as both the VBA and VHA have to report to the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration, it was assumed that the hiring processes would be similar.
Figure 2: Organizational Structure of the VHA

In 1995, the VHA organized itself into the structure shown in Figure 2 above. With 21 [now 23, seen in Figure 3 below] regional Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISN), over 1,400 care sites throughout the country, and a staff of 255,000, the VHA has provided health care for nearly 6 million veterans. The VISNs “are charged with conducting daily operations and decisions affecting hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, and Vet Centers located within their regions.” (2010 VA Organization Briefing Book, 2010)

Figure 3: Regions of VISN responsibility (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2010)
Due to the ties of the New England Regional VISN and care centers with MIT, these sites were used to build the “As-Is” model for the hiring process. Specific locations where data was obtained were the New England VISN, the Bedford VA Medical Center (Bedford), the Brockton VA Medical Center (Brockton), and the White River Junction VA Medical Center (White River).

Since each VISN and care site is responsible for maintaining its own staffing levels, this posed the first problem to mapping the overall process: each organization had customized the hiring process to meet its needs. As the VISN was primarily an administrative staff, their structure was small when contrasted with the hospitals responsible for direct patient care; to minimize their manning, they relied on the Bedford’s HR staff for their HR needs. Brockton and Bedford were classified as a long-term care facilities specializing in geriatric and psychiatric care. As Brockton was considered the more diverse hospital, they subsequently had a larger staff with more services. White River Junction provides acute care and clinical services.

1.6: E2E Initiative

To provide guidance for hiring within governmental organizations, in September 2008, OPM published the E2E Hiring Initiative, “an initiative designed to streamline and enhance the efficiency of the Federal hiring process.” (Graves, 2008). The E2E Initiative is broken down in five parts with the following overall timeline: Workforce Planning, Recruitment, Hiring Process, Security and Stability, and Orientation (seen in Figure 4 below).

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1 Shortly after completing my research, the VISN staffed its own HR specialist.
Each of these parts was then further broken down with a more detailed roadmap and explanation highlighting each step within that part (seen in Figure 5).

As the focus of the thesis is on the hiring process, only the two applicable sections will be studied: Workforce Planning and Hiring Process. A copy of these sections has been attached as Appendix B.

1.7: Thesis Aims and Boundaries

To resolve the argument, the following path was defined: 1) Map out the As-Is state of the hiring process, 2) Track job request/application packages (hence forth known as “packages”) through the
hiring process, 3) Conduct an analysis on data obtained using Systems Engineering (SE) tools, 4) Identify if the PD’s were the source of the problem in meeting the 80 day window, and 5) Provide feedback to improve the process. Achieving these aims proved to be difficult.

In attempting to map the As-Is state, two significant problems were encountered: 1) conflicting knowledge of the As-Is state by those involved and 2) the differences in the process between the VISN, and the different care sites. Each location’s staff was eager and willing to provide information, however, at times data obtained was confusing and conflicted with itself. Upon construction of the final map (Appendix C), no argument by the HR staffs could be made against it.

Tracking packages “from cradle to grave” was determined to be impossible. The first centralized point from which packages can be tracked is when they are delivered to the HR staff. In many cases, this point can be over a month after the process actually started; there is no official contact between HR and the Services when the Service Manager starts the process. Attempting to backtrack relied too heavily on personal opinions and views vice actual data. Tracking was accomplished by HR from the point of delivery onward; however, there were times when HR handed the package off to outside organizations and where individual steps could not be tracked. The tracking data available from HR is attached as Appendix D.

After starting to analyze the data obtained from recorded sources and interviews, locations of delays were identified; however, no single tool (including the model shown in Figure 6 below) appeared to be adequate to illustrate these delays. As such, the model in Appendix C has some characteristics developed from other mapping tools.

Providing feedback to improve the process also had its limitations. Especially within the medical field, where position requirements vary so widely due medical field requirements, developing recommendations for standardized processes was in some cases, not possible. Other limitations included the ability of the local organizations to alter national and inter-Federal service documents and requirements.

Regardless of proving or disproving the beliefs about the timeline, the final result of the research was the development of a detailed and further modifiable map which can be used to train managers and employees about the hiring process and be a useful tool for HR to explain where the sources of delays are.
Chapter 2: Previous Efforts

With the rising number of complaints over benefits and issuance of directives like the E2E, the VA could no longer accept the lengthy hiring process. The purpose of this chapter is to confirm that the VA acknowledges that issues exist with the current hiring timeline by providing brief examples of actions taken and previously conducted academic work to combat and model these issues.

2.1: Building SWAT Teams

The following was taken from the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administrations’ Hiring Reform Initiative:

Under the President’s mandate for the FY 2011 budget, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) tasked Federal agencies to review, analyze, and reform agency hiring processes. Specific areas identified for improvement included timeliness, plain language and streamlined job opportunity announcements (JOAs), communication with applicants, and the involvement of hiring managers. To meet the mandate, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) established the Hiring Reform SWAT Team in July 2009 that includes representatives across the Administrations and Staff Offices. (Administration, 2010)

That same initiative, which was published in 2010, also released some of the initial analyses developed by the SWAT team. The analyses: 1) highlighted several areas for the local HR offices to develop in-house improvements to help reduce the hiring timeline, 2) led to the development of a Hiring Process Map (Figure 6), 3) led to the development of ten streamlined Job Opportunity Announcement’s (JOA), and 4) led to the development of a survey to solicit information and opinions from hiring managers.

Figure 6: Department of Veterans Affairs Hiring Process (Administration, 2010)
After reviewing this roadmap and the available outputs from the SWAT Teams, I felt that not enough guidance was available to help the VHA analyze where the delays in timelines were stemming from. The blocks shown in the map above are more specific than the E2E Initiative map; however, the blocks do not always assign specific responsibility for tasks (i.e. Hiring Organization vs. Hospital COC), nor do they necessarily show how/what data flows between the blocks. From past experiences, understanding these missing elements has been the key to identifying time wasters. Therefore, a more detailed model would need to be developed.

2.2: Conducting Training Sessions

In addition to using the data provided by the SWAT Teams, many of the local VISN’s and care facilities have conducted their own team learning and training sessions to help reduce the hiring process timeline. One such implemented training plan taken from the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) is illustrated in Figure 7:

![Breakthrough Series Model](image)

**Figure 7: Collaborative Breakthrough Series Training Model (Institute for Healthcare Improvement, 2003)**

The performance metrics utilized by the various VA locations have shown that these, and other training sessions have met with success; the time to hire has decreased.

2.3: Formation of local committees to continue to analyze the hiring processes

In addition to the nationwide and Federal service wide SWAT Teams (high level) and local training sessions (low level), regional (mid-level) committees have also formed to review, study, and analyze HR issues. One such committee is the VA New England Healthcare System (VA NEHS) Network Human Resources Committee (HRC). The HRC is chartered to “provide leadership and oversight of the VA New England Healthcare System human resources and workforce planning/development strategies,
Their design and implementation. Their first function is to “Oversee development and implementation of VISN strategic objectives and initiatives related to human resources.” (VISN, 2009)

2.4: Mapping the Professional Standards Board (PSB) process

The PSB process represents a step in the overall hiring process where ambiguity and multiple paths have plagued the process timeline. Already realizing issues with the process, Brockton tasked Caitlin Hall, a Graduate Student from the University of Massachusetts to map out this particular process; her map is attached in Appendix D with an excerpt shown in Figure 8.

![Excerpt from PSB value stream swim lane diagram (Hall, 2010)](image)

While this document served as an excellent starting point for mapping the process, it did not clearly illustrate the communications or timing issues resulting from the actual process. As such, her data was incorporated into the developed model, and then expanded upon.
Chapter 3: Approach

This chapter presents a review of the current literature on the SE tools considered for organizing and analyzing the data collected. It also presents a further background on the assumptions made, which directed where focus was placed on developing models and solutions. Other sections incorporated include additional background data on some key elements; these elements require more detailing and explanation than would be appropriate for listing in a glossary. Finally, the chapter summarizes the research methods utilized to gather information and data for the thesis.

3.1: Systems Engineering Tools

One of the most important aspects of Systems Engineering is modeling. A model is an abstraction of reality that attempts to highlight or explain aspects of reality in a way that can be useful for analysis or synthesis in similar, future situations. One of the most difficult questions that systems engineers face are those of model completeness and fidelity. Models are never complete but they can explain or predict system behavior in many – but not all – instances. (de Weck, 2006)

In preparation for developing this thesis, a variety of resources were studied to become familiar with the SE modeling tools available. Based on the initial assumptions and thoughts about a hiring process based on the E2E initiative, it was assumed that one these SE tools would be used to model the actual hiring process. After conducting interviews, watching the process in action (when possible), and witnessing the frustrations, it became apparent that no single tool could adequately model the process to show the problems encountered. Perhaps that is the reason why the problems have gone on for so long; the SE tools and models developed inadvertently hid the sources of delay. In the end, the final process model (shown in Appendix C) incorporated bits and pieces of several tools to give the overall map. The following sections give some background on each of the tools considered and why, in the end, they weren’t adequate for developing the overall model.

3.1.1: Integration Definition for Process Modeling (IDEF)

With the intention of not just modeling the As-Is system, IDEF had originally appeared to be the perfect tool for modeling the hiring process as:

... attention is often focused not just on actual "as-is" activities, but possible activities as well – the activities of a merely envisioned company, for example, or those of a proposed virtual enterprise. Thus, one might say, the primary focus of IDEF0's ontology – the things that exist according to IDEF0 – is the class of all possible activities, whether actual or not. (Bernus, 1998)
Since the hiring process model shown in Figure 6 was not discovered until later in the research, building an IDEF0 model using the E2E initiative model as a template, and then populating it with the possible (or actual) activities appeared to be a good course plan to follow. Additional sources recommended the IDEF0 for: 1) formally describing a process, to ensure a detailed, clear, and accurate result; 2) when the process is complex and other methods would result in more complex diagrams; and 3) when there is time available to work on understanding and producing a complete and correct description of the process. (Syque, 2010)

IDEF0 uses boxes to model the activities and arrow segments to model the inputs, controls, outputs, and mechanisms (ICOMs). An example of a IDEF0 model is shown in Figure 9:

![Diagram of IDEF0 model for maintaining reparable spares](image)

The problems encountered with the IDEF0 language were that, like any language, it has its rules.

- All of the ICOMs are described with similar arrows; looking at examples of IDEF0 diagrams, it was difficult to easily separate the “who’s” from the “what’s.” In trying to identify the causes of delays, it is important to determine whether it’s a piece of data holding up the process or an individual responsible for the delay.
- Arrows, as stated above, can represent ICOM’s in showing the flow of what is produced, consumed, etc. The arrows can fork or join as seen in the output of block 4 in Figure 9 above; the output is either a completed asset or a spare asset. In the case of the VA, the output of several of the functions leads to a choice of one or perhaps multiple subsequent functions. Therefore, a system with multiple types of arrows would be necessary.
The “3-6” or “2-9” box rule masks the problems. When formally completed, the IDEFO diagram should have no more than either 3 to 6 or 2 to 9 functional boxes; too many boxes will make the diagram complex. When more than the number of set boxes exists, they should be grouped together in a “parent” box. Subsequent “descendent” boxes can be exploded to show the sub-steps within that box. Just as with the first conflicting rule, by making too many sub-diagrams, the problems get lost in the weeds.

Most importantly, there’s no definition of time in the IDEFO model. In looking at Figure 9, there is no indication of how long each step takes. It’s necessary to show this to allow the process observer to understand where the time holdups are. For example, in the process illustrated in Figure 9,

1) Removing and replace: 1 hour – any mechanic can perform.
2) Schedule into Shop: 6 weeks – limited number of mechanics and significant backlog.
3) Inspect or repair: 1 day – non complex part with readily available spare components.
4) Monitor and route: 1 day – simple retest and ship.

Without these timelines, it is unclear where the actual delays are occurring, and therefore that the PD’s are not accountable for all delays.

3.1.2: Value Stream Mapping (VSM)

Going into the study, the expectation was that delays resulting in the hiring process exceeding 80 days were due to unnecessary and time wasting steps. VSM is an excellent tool for clearly (and colorfully) illustrating and classifying these steps. Originally developed by Toyota, VSM was a tool for ‘material and information flow mapping.’

VSM looks at the full, end-to-end process. It helps you map visually how information and materials flow through all of the activities that occur – from the time an order is placed, to the time the product or service is delivered. The start is with customer needs [in this case, to fill a position] where the map shows how and when information is received. The end is when the product or service is delivered to the customer [the position is filled], with the map showing how decision-making and communication processes affect the whole flow. By looking at your process from start (receiving orders or forecasts) to finish (warehousing or distributing the product), you can clearly identify steps where no real value is added, or where there’s a bottleneck – and thus, you can eliminate these types of waste. (Mind Tools Ltd, 2010)

The steps in a VSM can be broken up into three types with three color schemes:

1) Value Added: Green – Transforms or shapes material or information, and the customer wants it, and it’s done right the first time.
2) Non-Value Added, but Necessary: Yellow – No value is created but cannot be eliminated, required (regulatory, legal)\(^2\)

3) Non-Value Added: Red – Consume resources but create no value in the eyes of the customer, waste\(^2\)

A simplified example of VSM is shown in Figure 10 for the student internship resume process:

![Diagram of VSM illustrating steps within the resume process which have or don't have value.]

Figure 10: VSM illustrating steps within the resume process which have or don't have value.\(^2\)

While VSM was a good tool, the following issues were noted:

- Despite what the E2E Initiative model shows, the hiring process is by no means routine or standardized. In the resumé example above, the process starts with a student creating a resumé. This works for the E2E Initiative model as well: Validate Need. However, when actually analyzing the first step, there are multiple starting points. The neglect of this fact enables the E2E Initiative to say that validating the need step takes only 1 day.
- VSM does not allow for the range of time. The third step in the process shows that it takes two days to “Print, copy, and distribute resumes.” What if there were two printers (a fast printer that prints in 1 hour and a slow printer that would take 2 days) and only one would be available; however, it was uncertain which printer would be available. What time period should be listed for that block?
- VSM shows the flow and progress of the process, but doesn’t clearly highlight the individual members or data required for the process. For instance, the last process says “Staff reviews & ranks resumés.” Which staff members? Is there an order to the Staff members? Are only certain members involved? If this process has 200 steps, would it be clear as to who was involved and where? No.

**3.1.3: Critical Path Method (CPM)**

Critical path is probably the best tool for showing dependencies on time, but the least usable in illustrating more than just activities; a formatting illustration is displayed in Figure 11.

With CPM, the functional activities (events) are traditionally represented as circles, vice boxes, and like both processes above, are linked with arrows. The arrows, unlike above, represent more of a

"logical dependency between tasks," rather than an ICOM. Where CPM is truly unique from the rest of the SE tools is in its representation of the time an activity takes and where the delays in starting the next process are.

Each block adjacent to an event has four times listed:

- **ES:** Earliest Start – This is the earliest start time of a job if all its predecessors start at their ES and take the expected duration to complete.\(^3\)
- **EF:** Earliest Finish – This is the ES plus the time value to complete that step.\(^3\)
- **LF:** Late Finish – This is the latest time a job can be finished, without delaying the project beyond its target time.\(^3\)
- **LS:** Late Start – This is the LF minus the time value to complete that step.\(^3\)

As discussed above with IDEFO or VSM, time is either not tracked, or tracked for a standardized process.

The original belief was that in the E2E initiative, sub-steps within the larger task blocks were happening concurrently. After conducting the observations, it was determined that in the process, there were very few concurrent steps; the dependencies for the subsequent steps were linearly dependent (i.e. finish step 1, then proceed to step 2). After conducting the observations, the focus would be on attempting to make several of the steps occur concurrently, thus minimizing the overall time to complete the process. One such case was with the CCU and the internal COC review (to be discussed later); these were two sub processes which were thought to be capable of being run concurrently. After discussions with the CCU, they were resolute on maintaining the process in the As-Is state.

As with the previous methods, CPM was shown to be not the right tool to use.

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• CPM does not detail the ICOM’s which could hold responsibility for the delays.
• The timing box is an excellent tool, however, in CPM, the time a step takes is fixed. The EF and LS calculations were based on the equations of \( EF = ES + \text{Step Time} \) and \( LS = LF - \text{Step Time} \). There is no accounting for variation in step time; as this was the purpose of the thesis, again, CPM was not the right tool.

3.1.5 Process Mapping Tool (PMT)

The PMT was a modeling tool developed for this thesis to give a simple, easy to understand, overall view of the process which illustrates the factors that were expected to be the responsible for the delays: people, data, and the processes themselves. Using concepts from each of the aforementioned tools, the overall path was laid out in Appendix C using Microsoft PowerPoint.

Microsoft PowerPoint was chosen to build the PMT model primarily for its compatibility and also for its simplicity. The model built by Caitlin Hall was done using Microsoft’s Visio Software; Visio, while an excellent modeling program, has several drawbacks. First, Visio is not part of the Microsoft Office package and expensive to buy separately. Second, as the VA’s computers are networked and tightly controlled, loading additional software onto the computers requires technical support and approval; once the model was made, the VA would not be able to view it or modify it for their own purposes. PowerPoint, on the other hand, is already loaded on the VA networked computers and is available at almost every workstation. For simplicity sake as well, PowerPoint was the chosen software. Building the model was simple with PowerPoint’s pre-designed blocks and arrows. As most managers already have familiarity with PowerPoint, making future modifications to the model would not require any additional training. Printing the document was also simple; each PowerPoint slide could be printed out as a piece of the puzzle, and then the pieces could be assembled.

3.1.5.1: Illustrating Options

As indicated in the discussion of IDEF0, no clear method for illustrating path options was shown. Originally, traditional logic symbols like the “diamond” for decision making or branching were considered; however, the overall flow path would have increased in length and with multiple options available, the available options would have been unclear. The system that was decided upon to illustrate options is shown in Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Also breaking from the IDEF0 and VSM mapping methods, the output arrows have the capability of stemming from the right side or bottom of the step boxes.

### 3.1.5.2: Illustrating ICOM's

Merging IDEF0’s concept of specifying ICOM’s with the color coding concept of VSM, staff and data are represented as follows in Table 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Yellow Block" /></td>
<td>Yellow Block: represents a step in the process; similar to IDEF0’s version of an activity and VSM’s version of process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Red Block" /></td>
<td>Red Block: represents a given staff member who participates and/or is responsible for that step</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Orange Block" /></td>
<td>Orange Block: represents a source of data or input. Examples would be notes, standardized forms, or e-mails.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Explanation of developed ICOM symbols

Prior to and after conducting the observations and interviews, a noted recurring theme was that the E2E Initiative failed to show who specifically was involved in the process (and therefore directly responsible for each step) and what data was needed to complete each step. HR staff reported numerous issues of packages being delivered to them with incomplete or missing forms. By clearly illustrating what went to whom, the goal is to alleviate this issue.

### 3.1.5.3: Illustrating Time

Developing a plan for tracking time became the most unique concept for this model as no tool tracked the expected maximum, average, and minimum times. VSM gave what can be an assumed
average time (which can have large deviations) and CPM gave a fixed time for each step. The format used for the model is shown in Figure 12.

![Figure 12: Explanation of time representation within the model.](image)

The three times depicted above can be explained as follows:

- **Minimum number of days to complete (MIN):** Either what has been directly observed or derived based on interviews
- **Average number of days to complete (AVG):** Either what has been directly observed or the average of the maximum and minimum values
- **Maximum number of days to complete (MAX):** Either what has been directly observed or derived based on interviews

One unique property about this concept is that zero time can be represented as well. In CPM or VSM, each event has a designated time; i.e. 1 day. It is difficult to illustrate in these tools what happens if two linear steps can occur in the same day, but each takes a finite amount of time. For example, an e-mail is sent today (Step 1, Day 1). If opened (Step 2) and responded to (Step 3) on Day 1, than Steps 2 and 3 took no time, therefore, the minimum time is zero. However, if the e-mail is sent at the end of Day 1, not opened until the afternoon of Day 2, and responded to on Day 3, then Steps 2 and 3 each took 1 Day.

The derivation of each of the step time will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4, with the assumptions about time being explained in section 3.2.

### 3.1.5.4: The Composite PMT Model

Show in Figure 13 is an excerpt from Appendix C illustrating the use of all of the symbols, when brought together.
3.2: Assumptions

The goal of the thesis was to model the hiring process for the VA; as the VA is a branch of the Federal government and follows Federal hiring guidelines, it was possible to say that, in essence, the Federal hiring process was being modeled. Therefore, to ensure that the scope of the observations conducted and recommendations made were limited, boundaries were set and assumptions were made.

The largest assumption/boundary made was that the Federal government’s processes could not be changed. Any nationwide utilized forms and procedures would require extensive and excessive work to try and modify; with the hiring process co-owned by both OPM and VA, both parties would be required to agree on most process changes. While not limiting the scope of conclusions to be made (in the hopes that nationwide reforms may be able to use the data), the majority of the recommendations were focused on efforts that the local levels could implement (e.g. locally generated forms and procedures).

When discussing hiring, there are two primary personnel areas for the Federal services to hire from: internal and external to the Federal service. The E2E Initiative was geared toward hiring from external sources based on the statement that:

The [E2E] hiring process is designed for filling positions with new hires from outside the Federal Government into the competitive service under the agency’s delegated examining authority (5 USC 1104(a)(2). (End-to-End Hiring Initiative, 2008)

For making the model, the assumption made was that the delegated examining authority was not the only hiring organization. Utilizing the hiring paths of the delegated examining authority and the HR offices, both internal and external, could be drawn from; therefore the processes used to hire internally
and externally had to be considered. With the White House launching a Major Veterans Employment Initiative, and stating the desire to hire more than 50,000 veterans Department-wide by 2012 (The White House, 2009), all paths hiring veterans (accomplished by both the DEU and HR) should be considered, especially since some of the non-delegated examining authority means (paths available to HR) are geared specifically for hiring veterans.

The next assumption made was that the model would cover the hiring process for recently vacated positions, as well as newly created positions out of necessity. The E2E Initiative states that:

Workforce planning and recruitment processes are completed (for example: positions are developed, validated, approved for resourcing, classified, position description is established and the appropriate assessment tools are developed prior to initiating the request for personnel action) (End-to-End Hiring Initiative, 2008)

In the E2E Initiative, one day is allotted for “Review the Position Description” implying that the PD already existed. As shown in the model, the timeline associated with generating, reviewing, and classifying a new or modified PD takes significantly longer than 1 day. Additionally, as many of the PD’s are significantly out-of-date, the assumption that they are developed prior to initiating the request is a false one. Much of the PD development only occurs once the requirements of the job are known.

In calculating the timeline, the following assumptions were made:

- Any single process taking longer than 5 days would have two days added to it for the weekend. As the E2E bases its timeline on calendar days vice working days, an accurate model would have to account for weekends as well.

- The minimum time associated with hand-offs between personnel would be 0 days. The maximum would be 1 day. This is based on the previous process being completed but not having the process outputs immediately delivered to the next location. Upon delivery, the person next responsible for the process does not start it until the following day.

- The minimum time associated with mailing documents between locations would be 2 days; the maximum would be 4 days. This is based on the mail drop-off being before or after the pick-up time, the distance traveled by the mail, and the subsequent delivery time.

For positions covered by this particular hiring process, the positions would be those title jobs common to the VA; among those positions would be Title 5, Title 38, and Hybrid Title 38 jobs. A more detailed explanation of these jobs is covered in the following section.
3.3: Terms

Several terms discussed in the Data Chapter should have additional background provided; while not necessarily important in the hiring process itself, an understanding of these terms prior to entering the Data Chapter will alleviate the potential for confusion.

3.3.1: Services vs. Disciplines

A Service can be defined as a branch within the local facility. Examples of a service within a care center would be: Primary Care, Mental Health, or Surgery.

A Discipline can be defined as a field within the local facility. Examples of disciplines within a care center would be: Physical Therapy, Psychology, or Pharmacology.

In terms of the E2E Initiative, the “Managers” are the respective Service Chiefs or their designated AO’s. As was witnessed, many times confusion arises as to what the responsibilities and roles of the Service Chiefs and Discipline Chiefs are in relation to each other. In some cases Services were responsible for submitting the hiring and PSB documents, while the Disciplines were responsible for setting up VetPro accounts and computer access; however, the Service might not send data to the Discipline, or vice versa. One specific case where confusion could arise was with the relationship between Psychology and Mental Health. As a Discipline, the entire Psychology office fell within Mental Health, but Mental Health encompassed more than just Psychology; as a result, e-mails, memorandum, etc. could be passed to Psychology with the assumption that all of Mental Health would receive them, but this would not be the case.

Additional areas of potential miscommunication and circular feedback loops arise between the Services and HR Specialists. HR Specialists focus on particular disciplines (i.e. Occupational Therapy). The Service, on the other hand, is responsible for all staff within that service (e.g. all Disciplines in Primary Care). The result is the AO processing paperwork for three positions could need to work with three separate Specialists, whereas if the Discipline was processing the paperwork, the Discipline would be working with the same HR Specialist.

3.3.2: Titled Positions

The origins of the titled positions are from the various titles of codes within the United States Code (USC). For example, for a Title 38 employee, the following is taken from USC Title 38, Part V, Chapter 74, Subchapter III, Section 7431 of the USC:
(a) In order to recruit and retain highly qualified physicians and dentists in the Veterans Health Administration, the Secretary shall provide special pay under this subchapter. Such special pay shall be provided under regulations that the Secretary shall prescribe to carry out this subchapter. Before prescribing regulations under this subchapter, the Secretary shall receive the recommendations of the Under Secretary for Health with respect to those regulations.

(b) Special pay may be paid to a physician or dentist under this subchapter only upon the execution of, and for the duration of, a written agreement entered into by the physician or dentist in accordance with section 7432 of this title.

To simplify the position descriptions, Title 5 is the “catch-all” title for occupations not specifically called out in other USC Titles. Hybrid Title 38 (Title 38H) positions are those requiring screening and certification checks at the same level as a Title 38 position, but still being paid as if they were Title 5 employees. Examples of Title 38H positions include Occupational Therapists and Pharmacists. Title 38 occupations can generally be grouped as those having advanced skills; examples include Physicians, Dentists, and Registered Nurses.

3.3.3: Delegated Examining Unit (DEU)

From the Defense Finance and Accounting Service website, the DEU “is a unit that is granted authority by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), to examine résumés for positions indicated, establish competitor inventories (registers), and issue certificates of eligibles.” (Service) The DEU is a sub-set of the organization (in this case, the VA) qualified to post job advertisements, review and rank responses, and generate the Certificate letters (to be further discussed in Chapter 4). While still members of that parent organization, they act independent of the individual care facilities or VISN’s HR staff.

3.3.4: General Schedule (GS) Pay Scales

The GS pay system is the pay scale used for the majority of Federal civilian employees. The scale has 15 levels (GS-1 through GS-15) and each pay scale is then subdivided into 10 Steps.

A position will be classified at a given pay scale based on the level of requirements for that position; in general, those requirements pair up with an educational degree. For example, the knowledge requirements for an entry level position (GS 1 through 4) would be relatively low; the expected educational background for these positions would be an Associate Level Degree. Positions with GS pay grades 5 through 8 would pair up with a Bachelor’s Level Degree and so on.
The Steps within a given pay grade are based on time in service and level of experience. When considering time in service, a person doing a particular job for 3 years would be at Step 3 whereas a person doing that same job for two years would only be at a Step 2. The step system does not increase linearly with time in a pay grade through all ten Steps. In terms of level of experience, an individual transferring into a Federal job similar to what they were doing in the private sector would be brought in at a higher step (perhaps Step 5), than an individual starting the job new (Step 1).

3.3: Data Collection

As the intention for this thesis was to model the actual hiring process, it was necessary to see the process in action. The data collected to build the model was obtained from several sources.

The first source was direct observation. When allowed, visual observations were taken of the various HR members as they conducted their daily business. The goal was to identify how time was being spent with the intentions of identifying delays responsible for inhibiting the accomplishment of the 80 day timeline and for elimination of the unnecessary steps they went through.

The second source of data was collected via interview. In many cases, it was not possible to watch the process in action; therefore various members of the applicable staffs (DEU, HR, CCU, etc.) were interviewed to determine what the sub-steps in each process were. The template for the interview consent form used is attached in Appendix D.

The third source of data was from data collected by the various agencies. With the recent push to reduce the timeline, many HR staffs had setup their own internal trackers (as contained in Appendix D). This data was factored in when developing the average, maximum and minimum times for the timeline.

The fourth source of data was from OPM and VA memorandum and documentation. These sources were studied to identify agency policies and courses of action taken.

The final source of data was the locally generated forms which aided in the understanding of the hiring process and provided the means to improve the process.
Chapter 4: Data

This chapter presents the data collected via the means stated in Chapter 3. Once the model was built, it was possible to group the sub-steps into major steps or blocks similar to those seen in the E2E Initiative’s Hiring Process Map which then subsequently allowed for a comparison between the two models.

4.1: High Level Comparison of the E2E Initiative and the “As-Is” Model

Illustrated below (Figure 14) is the hiring process as conceptualized by the E2E Initiative and the hiring process as realized by the VA (Figure 15).

![Figure 14: The E2E Initiative Hiring Process](image)

![Figure 15: The actual hiring process as accomplished by the VA](image)

Many of the high level steps are similar in nature; however, certain steps contained processes that were so significantly time consuming and involved uniquely assigned personnel, that they merited their own step. Additionally, at the point of advertising and posting the positions, two major flow paths existed such that showing the linear path illustrated in Figure 14 was felt to be a misrepresentation.

4.2: Elements and Tasks of the Hiring Process

To discuss the process above, the format outlining each step from the E2E Initiative was used with some additions made. The original Hiring Process Elements and Tasks section of the E2E did not have a minimum number of days for this process.
4.2.1: Validate the Need against the Workforce, Staffing, and Recruiting Plans

Ownership: Service Chief, AO

Minimum number of calendar days: 1

Maximum number of calendar days: 18

- Review workforce, succession, and staff plans.
- Review recruitment plan to identify the resources and sources for recruitment.
- Understand the skills gap in the organization.

While there are four possible entry points within this step that start the hiring process, they can be generalized into two categories or cases: replacing an existing employee in a job or new job creation/identification. Case one is the simpler of the two cases. Due to retirement, promotion, etc., an existing position becomes vacant. In this case, validation of need requires little additional work as all of the data justifying that position already exists.

In case two, a new job is being created where one did not exist before; this can be further broken down into two sub-cases. The first sub-case is replicating an existing job (e.g. increasing the maintenance staff from 4 workers to 5 workers). The second sub-case is creating a new job based on need. For example, the local VISN was having issues with their communications; it was therefore decided that a communications/IT staff position should be created and then someone hired for that position.

OPM's E2E Initiative discusses the justification/validation process primarily in the Workforce Planning section. To determine the justification for most jobs, tools like timesheets or duty assignment sheets are used to collect and display data. Analysis of these tools yields the number of personnel required for a given service. Collecting this data, as shown in Figure 5 is a continuous process. Hence why, for some jobs, the validation process can take one day.

In many other cases, the justification is not so easily obtained. In discussions with members of several Service lines, new requirements/collateral duties are published on a routine basis. As these new duties are added to the aforementioned duty assignment sheets, personnel have to be juggled to ensure all duties can be met. While the service may immediately see that all responsibilities cannot be adequately met with existing staff and may want to start the hiring process immediately, proof still has to be generated such that it can be offered in the review process as to why the existing staff isn’t adequate. Generation of this proof can be accomplished through timesheets showing the breakdown of

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4 Taken from E2E Initiative
time spent on each duty or performance metrics showing the drop in other performance areas due to the balancing of time across both new and old responsibilities.

Regardless of the tools used, the generation of this proof will take the time of the Service Chief or their Assistant (AO), who may already be inundated with existing work. Virtually every service chief interviewed was suffering from one of two conditions: reduced capability due to the need to train new staff or staff unavailable due to vacation or sickness absence. The reduced capability to train new staff is the classic Systems Dynamics problem. With the departure of knowledgeable senior staff, and the replenishment of untrained staff, remaining senior staff productivity decreases while training the junior staff. When productivity falls, the Service Chief/AO has to become more involved in the lower levels of the day-to-day operations to ensure continued productivity. The second case is similar with the unavailability of regular staff. For the period the process was observed, at some points, only one of the three senior officers for certain Services was available.

Based on the assumption that the job creation was due to new requirements being added, assume:

1) 2 days to reorganize the duty list (based on not all staff being available concurrently due to work shifts) and identify all required training, data, and background for new responsibilities.

2) 2 days to conduct all required training and obtain all required background materials (i.e. manuals, materials, etc.).

3) 14 days to observe and measure effects of implementing new duty schedule (including two interim weekends).

This leads to the 18 day maximum window.

Examples and templates of the documents generated by the AO/Service are provided in Appendix E.

4.2.2: Develop PD

Ownership: AO

Minimum Number of Calendar Days: 1

Maximum Number of Calendar Days: 7

- Review position description for currency and accuracy of the duties and occupation.4
- Identify changes to the position.4
- Verify risk level designation.4
- Verify sensitivity level/clearance eligibility4
During this time period, the AO will be the lead in drafting the PD; through interviews and observations, it was determined that there were three separate PD drafting options the AO could choose from:

1) Utilize an existing PD – Reuse of a previously approved PD
2) Modify an existing PD – Due to change in position requirements or updating previously inaccurate PD
3) Draft a new PD – When creating a new position within an organization

The use of an existing PD can greatly simplify and reduce the time required to bring new personnel onboard; this was the case described by the E2E Initiative. In the particular case of needing to fill an existing and currently vacant position, if a PD is reused, potentially no additional permissions from within the local COC are required; the required reviews are decided upon by the facility’s/organization’s senior members. Additionally, the administrative work required by the AO is lessened as there is no need to modify the existing organizational chart or previously drafted administrative forms (e.g. SF-52). If a PD is reused for the case of increasing the number of staff (the janitor example from above), the local administration will be required to review the PD along with the validation data from the first step (as they are increasing the organization’s required budget), but as the PD has already been approved and classified, Step 4 in the timeline can be bypassed.

It should be noted here, that this is where the argument originates from. Previously approved PD’s may not adequately describe the position; however, if the need to fill a position is great (i.e. with the loss of the previous person in that position) senior staff may reuse a PD to expedite filling the gap.

A modified PD will be drafted from either an existing PD for an existing position or from a PD developed from a non-locally developed position. As a position exists/evolves over time, the requirements and burdens of that position may change. To raise the pay or to change the description of the position, the AO will modify the PD. Sometimes the modifications are easy as they can be “cut-and-pasted” from similar jobs. In this case, time is spent researching a variety of similar PD’s. Some positions may have had additional responsibilities tacked on which increased the overall requirements for a position; as a result there is potentially an increase pay grade that now accompanies the job due to the increase in responsibility (e.g. going from a GS-7 to a GS-8).

New PD’s take the longest time period to generate. As the generation process is tied in very closely with the analysis from the Validation Step, and an AO may not be familiar with all of the new responsibilities, several drafts may have to be written until the new PD is correct. This drafting process will undergo at least one review iteration between the AO and Service Chief, and if the Service Chief is
currently unavailable, delay time increases. Therefore, for drafting a new PD, the following timeline can exist:

1) 1 Day to receive tasking from Chief to create a new position.
2) 1 Day to research similar jobs available at other locations and contact other facilities for their developed PD’s, draft OF-8, modify organizational chart, and draft SF-52.
3) 1 Day to receive PD from other locations and research available classification data on OPM website.
4) 1 Day to draft the PD and deliver, along with other drafted/modified documents to Service Chief for review; Service Chief reviews and returns draft to AO with comments/changes.
5) 1 Day to discuss developed PD with Service Chief, make requested modifications, and reroute to Service Chief. Service Chief approves and routes to Quad Board member/Resource Board member for review.
6) 2 Days for weekend.

A final note about PD’s is that even though the PD may be completely valid, it still may not reflect the actual nature of the job. PD’s detail the responsibilities included in the position even though those responsibilities may not be routinely or ever performed. An example of the police officer PD is shown below:

Department of Veterans Affairs Police primary duties are the performance of law enforcement work in the preservation of the peace; the prevention, detection, and investigation of crimes occurring on Veterans Administration controlled property; arrest of violators; the control of traffic; the provision of assistance for citizens in emergency situations, including the protection of personnel, civil rights, and VA owned or controlled property. . . Specific duties and responsibilities are as follows: Interrogates suspects. . . Detains suspects and witnesses. . . Makes arrests and performs “booking” procedures. . . Releases to detectives or investigators information gathered at the scene of an incident or from an investigation. . . Conducting long and short-term investigations when solutions cannot be achieved during the course of a normal patrol shift(s). . . Develop informants and informant network.

In some cases, some of the officers serving in the VA Police Force may never actually partake in criminal investigations or “develop informants.”

An example of a PD taken from OPM’s website is attached in Appendix E.
4.2.3: Review within Internal Chain-of-Command

Ownership: Resource Board or Quad Committee Member

Minimum Number of Calendar Days: 0

Maximum Number of Calendar Days: 40

- Review position description for currency and accuracy of the duties and occupation.
- Determine tentative pay grade.
- Determine if available budget can support.
- Decide to proceed with hiring process.

This step within the hiring process is the most varied and differing based on facility or organization; it is also the one step not fully detailed within the E2E Initiative. For the case where the hiring process has been initiated to fill a prior existing, and now vacant position, with a previously approved PD, the COC may or may not give permission to bypass them and send the package straight to HR. In every other case, the package has to be routed through the COC. Shown in Figure 16 is an example of the review process at Bedford.

![Procedure for requesting Vice staffing backfill (within FTEE)](image)

Figure 16: Internal review process within Bedford (VA)

In this case illustrated above, the packages are delivered to the Quad Member (one of four senior staff at the hospital: Director, Chief of Staff, Associate Director, and Nurse Executive) associated with the Service Chief; when the Quad Member’s questions are satisfied (which could be after numerous go-rounds), the Quad Member can choose one of the three options listed below.
In other locations, the Quad, as an administrative board, meets twice monthly to discuss issues pertaining to the hospital. Only one of those meetings is to discuss personnel issues. Packages must be delivered to the applicable Quad Member at least several days (the general standard is 7-10 days) prior to the Board Meeting to enable them to review the packages and ask their own questions to the Service Managers. The Quad member then presents that package to the other three members at that monthly meeting for review. A vote is then made to determine one of the following three options:

1) The job will not be offered as the need is not valid,
2) The job need is valid, however, presently funding is not available for the job, or
3) The job need is valid and the job can be made available.

For the first instance, the request for a position is denied. Reasons for the denial might include the belief that validation documentation is inadequate or that there are other means which are less costly (than hiring additional staff) to address the needs of the service. For the second instance, the Board may agree that the need does exist and hiring additional staff is the only means of meeting the need; however, at the present time funding is not available to hire additional staff so the package will be held until a later date. The third instance allows the package to progress through the hiring process.

For the VISNs, which have much smaller staffs and consist primarily of managerial level positions, the flow path illustrated in Figure 16 is replaced by a VISN Resource Board; the VISN Resource Board meets weekly and new staffing positions are brought up at the weekly meetings.

In closing, the maximum time window listed for this step is based on missing the deadline of having the package to the Board Member prior to the next meeting, and the minimum time limit is based on the case whereby no review is required, and the package can pass directly to HR.

4.2.4: Job Classification

Ownership: Consolidated Classification Unit (CCU)

Minimum Number of Calendar Days: 2

Maximum Number of Calendar Days: 28

- Review position description for currency and accuracy of the duties and occupation.
- Determine position pay grade.

A preliminary, estimated pay grade is developed by the Quad or Resource Board and, based on that estimated grade, the Board determines which of the three options from Chapter 4.2.3 will be chosen. This preliminary estimate along with the package is sent electronically to an inbox queue for the CCU.
The CCU’s primary responsibility is to officially classify the pay grade entitled to a package. At this point, the packages consist of Organizational charts, OF-8 (Position Description) and SF-52 (Request for Personnel Action) forms. The CCU processes two main groups of packages: new positions and positions requesting pay grade upgrades. Using OPM documentation as reference material, the CCU’s members are trained to review the package and, based on similar positions or directives from OPM, classify the job. The CCU takes the “next package off the top” of the queue to classify it. Examples of the classification material available to the CCU are provided in Appendix F. Upon completion of classifying a package, the CCU will forward the package on to the care site’s HR unit and forward a copy of the now complete OF-8 (where the pay grade is listed) back to the original service.

Originally organized within the local HR offices, the staff associated with classification was/is being pulled from care centers to create these stand-alone CCU’s; the members of the CCU’s currently work in a centralized facility, however, in the future the members will migrate to work out of their own homes.

With the CCU undergoing the migration from in to out-of-house and having just taken onboard a number of new recruits, the classification process has seen significant slowdown in recent times, hence the lengthy number of maximum days.

4.2.5: Processing and Job Analysis

Ownership: HR Specialist and AO

Minimum Number of Calendar Days: 5
Average Number of Calendar Days: 7
Maximum Number of Calendar Days: 9

- Review package for currency and accuracy.
- Determination of Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSA) requirements.
- Confirm Job Analysis.4
- Identify Assessment Tools.4

For the maximum timeline case scenarios listed above, this could be the first time the HR representatives gets their hands on a package, whose drafting and processing started over two months beforehand.

Within the HR office, staff members are assigned as specialists: representatives of HR who handle and coordinate hiring for specific disciplines of work (e.g. Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Facilities, etc.); except for unusual circumstances, are not subject matter experts in those fields (i.e. the
HR Occupational Therapy Specialist is not an Occupational Therapist themselves). In the case of the New England VISN, which utilized Bedford’s HR offices, no specific HR specialist was assigned; packages were handled by the next available Specialist. At the time of concluding this research, the VISN had just acquired a staff position for an HR specialist on their own permanent staff.

The HR Specialists would receive the packages from the CCU, the internal Board, or directly from the service and begin the processing procedures. The first step is a review of the package to ensure the 1) required forms and documents are present and correct and 2) the service isn’t demanding a set of job requirements that it isn’t allowed to set. From interviews and data provided, as many as 10% of the packages have administrative errors or are missing required information for a specific field; an example of how this data is tracked is enclosed in Appendix D. The second instance isn’t due to intentional errors, but lack of understanding. Just as the Specialists are not service/discipline experts, the Service Chiefs/AO’s are not OPM requirement experts. An example of an instance would be the service requesting an applicant for a position have a graduate degree, however, based on the pay grade requirements (i.e. GS-6 requirements), only and undergraduate degree is required.

Next, the specialist starts drafting the KSA’s and assessment tools for the package. As the specialist is not the service expert, they draft the KSA’s based on data provided by the Service (e.g. from the PD or from additionally provided inputs), communicating directly with the service (via e-mail or phone), and using resources available from OPM such as Standards for Trades. For the example of an air conditioning equipment mechanic, the following Standard was available:

Nonsupervisory work that is performed to repair and modify a variety of equipment and systems that achieve regulated climatic conditions. This work requires knowledge of principles of air conditioning, the ability to recognize and determine the best method for correcting malfunctions and the skill to make repairs to a variety of air conditioning and cooling unit systems. (Management, 1971)

The development of the assessment tool is, likewise, a similar challenge. Resources are available through OPM to help develop these tools. Once the KSA’s and Assessment tools are developed, they are routed back to the Services for review, who in turn, reply with comments or “good-to-go” response e-mails.

In preparing the package, the following timeline could exist:

1) 1 day to receive and acknowledge receipt of the package.
2) 2 days to verify all required documentation is present, obtain missing documentation/correct errors in requests, review OPM requirements for a specific job.
3) 2 days to develop list of KSA’s and Assessment Tools/Strategy and route to service for review.

Access to these resources is restricted.
4) 1 day to review corrections/address comments and reroute to service and get approval from service.

5) 1 day lag due to workload/absence. With specialists focusing on given areas, if a specialist is absent and others cover the workload, additional time will be necessary for the lack of knowledge about the given field. This day also accounts for surges in package submission.

6) 2 days for the weekend.

4.2.6: Create/Post Job Opportunity, Receive Applications and Notify Applicants, & Close Job Offer

Ownership: HR Specialist and/or Delegated Examining Unit (DEU) Representative

Minimum Number of Calendar Days: 17
Average Number of Calendar Days: 28
Maximum Number of Calendar Days: 29

- Develop job announcement.
- Post job announcement.
- Use an automated staffing system that provides reasonable accommodation in the application and hiring process for individuals with disabilities. ⁴
- Take into account individuals who do not have internet access. ⁴
- Accept applications with supporting documentation only during the open period of the job announcement. ⁴
- Document receipt of applications by date stamping applications on hard copy applications or with electronic date markers. ⁴
- Notify applicants of receipt of their application. ⁴

Within this step, there are two alternate paths (as illustrated by Figure 15) by which the sub-steps (which are similar for both paths) are accomplished. For Title 5 positions being posted to the general public (i.e. outside of the VA and government), the DEU will be responsible agency; for all other positions and distribution means, the HR staff will be the responsible agency.

In the case of the DEU, the applicable recruitment request forms generated by HR are e-mailed to the local DEU’s centralized e-mail queue. When accessed by the next available DEU representative, the actual announcement which will be posted on USAJobs is drafted; a benchmark form with the advertisement draft is submitted back to the points of contact on the original request form submitted by HR. Generally, only the HR Specialist is a point-of-contact, not any of the Service members. Once the draft is approved, the Specialist signs
off on the benchmark form and returns it to the DEU representative. The DEU representative then posts the position advertisement on the USAJobs Website.

An example of the posting is seen in Figure 17 below. Open to anyone, applicants can review the job summary, key requirements, duties, qualifications and evaluations, and benefits from this website. The process to apply for this position also commences from this website; résumés can be uploaded and the questionnaire/assessment tool developed by the HR Specialist is accessed from here. When a candidate for a position completes the process, an automatic acknowledgement e-mail is generated and sent to the candidate’s e-mail address. After the allotted time period (two weeks is standard), the job closes. After closing, an additional two days is allotted for candidates who have to fax/mail in additional documentation (which could not be submitted electronically) as part of their application. (Administration, 2010)

Figure 17: Program Support Assistant position posted on USAJOBS by the DEU

Via the second path, the package never leaves HR’s care; this route has several advantages over the DEU route. First, upon agreement on the KSA’s and Assessment tools (previous step), the HR Specialist can immediately begin drafting the advertisement announcing the position’s availability; the
transmission/receipt delay between HR and DEU is negated. Once completed, the advertisement gets routed back to the Service for review (vice in the case of the DEU where communication existed between the DEU and HR); this helps to eliminate the potential “telephone game” effect.

The next significant advantage is there are a variety of different announcement publication methods available for HR to use, which DEU cannot. For the specific case of the VA, the options include:

- Hospital Wide – Reaches throughout that particular care center
- VISN Wide – Across a given region
- Agency Wide – Across the entire VA
- Government Wide – Across all Federal services
- Status Eligible Groups – Among these are:
  - Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA) – authority by which agencies may, if they wish, appoint an eligible veteran without competition. (US Army, 2009)
  - Veterans Employment Opportunities Act of 1998 (VEOA) – allows eligible veterans to apply and compete for positions announced under merit promotion procedures when the hiring agency is recruiting from outside its own workforce. (US Department of Agriculture)

The specific advantage of having all of these different options will be explained in section 4.2.7.

In contrast between the two timelines, the DEU is the slower path as seen Table 3’s maximum time analysis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Step</th>
<th>DEU (days)</th>
<th>HR (days)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transmission from HR</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queue due to expected backlog</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time required to draft</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time required for draft approval</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posting/Time Period Job available for</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Time to receive non-electronically transmitted application material</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekends</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: DEU versus HR advertisement and drafting time comparison

The minimum time scenario would still be lower for HR. In that case, without losses due to transmission and open communication between the service and HR, the following suggested timeline would exist:

1) 1 day to draft, review, and approve the postings.
2) 10 days to post.
3) 2 days for additional time to receive non-electronically transmitted application material.
4) 4 days for weekends.

This yields 17 days in total.

In comparing predictions with actual data, the actual data collected by the VA shows similar numbers for overall timeframes. Exact comparisons cannot be made to the individual steps as the VA only recorded the dates of major steps as seen in Table 4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Minimum Days</th>
<th>Average Days</th>
<th>Maximum Days</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date Submitted to DEU to</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date Announcement Opened</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Announcement Open to Announcement Close</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals:</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Analysis from provided data

As the minimum and maximum values represented unique cases, they were not considered for use in the case studies.

4.2.7: Evaluation of Applications

Ownership: HR Specialist and/or DEU Representative

Minimum number of Calendar Days: 2
Average number of Calendar Days: 6
Maximum number of Calendar Days: 10

- Evaluate applications.
- Rate and rank applicants based on developed assessment tools.
- Notify applicants of results of the qualification evaluation.

With the job closed, both the HR Specialist and/or the DEU representative start the process of evaluating the applicants’ packages. Access to the specifics on this process was restricted; however, the E2E Initiative gives the following details on the reviews (End-to-End Hiring Initiative, 2008):

- Review applications for minimum qualification determination.
- Review applications for selective placement factors, if any.
- Review applications for quality ranking factors, if any.
- Identify CTAP, ICTAP, or RPL eligibility:
- Determine application meets “well-qualified” definition identified on job announcement.
- Review applications for legal requirements (i.e., veterans’ preference, citizenship, age, etc.).

Similarly, for rating and ranking the applications (End-to-End Hiring Initiative, 2008):
- Rate applications based on the assessment tool created for the position.
- Apply veterans’ preference, if appropriate
- Place candidates in the appropriate ranking order (i.e., traditional ranking or category rating).

To provide some illustration of the ranking process, the following generic example has been generated: A job with 50 applicants has closed and all required documentation has been received; two of the applicants have denoted that they were disabled veterans, but still capable of accomplishing the job (i.e. no specific physical requirements limited the completion of the job). The disabled veterans are automatically considered, and brought to the top of the ranking list. The remaining candidates are then ranked based on the assessment tool. The agency then screens the applicants’ packages to verify that they meet the requirements and only selects the top candidates for review to the service. This screening includes double-checking the answers to the analysis tools “against the applicants resumes to make sure the candidates haven’t oversold themselves.” (Losey, How HUD cut its hiring times in half, 2010)

Each individual announcement publication method has its own ranking criteria and this becomes the advantage discussed in the previous section. A specific candidate may apply via the VISN-wide search and the DEU nationwide search. As the candidate may not be a disabled veteran, but already a local employee of the VA, they may be ranked higher in the VISN-wide search than the DEU nationwide search, and as a result, make the screening cutoff for the VISN-wide search. This then gives the service a wider range of candidates to select from.

In comparing the timelines between the DEU and HR, variations in the minimum and maximum time windows could be caused by the following reasons: For the DEU, with the nation-wide publication, more applicants are expected to respond to the position advertisement than for an “in-house” advertisement; while this should imply longer time to review the packages, 1) DEU has several internal thresholds revolving around the assessment tools which limits the number of packages they review and 2) DEU reportedly has more automated processes which enable faster reviews. Therefore, the process could be shorter than that listed by OPM. For HR, with less automated processes and more independently ranked sources (as listed in section 4.2.6), the process could take longer.
Without being able to gain more detail on the review sub-processes, the maximum and minimum timelines were based on the analysis of the data provided by the VA and then factoring in some corrections for the Step boundaries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum (Days)</th>
<th>Average (Days)</th>
<th>Maximum (Days)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation (Days)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEU 5</td>
<td>HR 2</td>
<td>DEU 8</td>
<td>HR 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>DEU 58</td>
<td>HR 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>DEU 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>HR 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Determined time between closing of publicized position and delivery to Service

As these times (Table 5) include the period allotted for issuing the certificate (section 4.2.8), the maximum, average, and minimum times for this step were calculated by adding or subtracting one standard deviation to the average, and then subtracting the average value determined in section 4.2.8. The actual maximum and minimum values were not used as they appeared to represent outlier cases, not the normal scenarios.

4.2.8: Issue Certificate

Ownership: HR Specialist and/or DEU Representative

Minimum number of Calendar Days: 1
Average number of Calendar Days: 2
Maximum number of Calendar Days: 3
- Generation of Certificate of Eligibles (Qualified Candidates). 4
- Compilation of all Certificates for the respective services. 4
- Applicant notification of eligibility. 4

A Certificate (Cert) is the document prepared by the posting agency which lists the candidates that the agency has judged to meet the requirements for the position. This Cert becomes the cover letter for the package containing the recommended candidates’ applications. For the case of the DEU, which, in most cases is not co-located with the service, the Cert letter and package have to migrate back to the Service’s location; as the migration can be done electronically (via e-mail) or by courier (FedEx), it can instantaneous or delayed. The minimum time is therefore based on the package being posted by HR versus the maximum time which requires express mailing the package back; the average time is the average of the two.

If both internal and external posting paths were used, HR will compile the DEU’s package and Certificate with their own for delivery to the service for further review.
4.2.9: Review Applications, Conduct Interviews, Check References, Select or Not Select Candidate, and Return Certificate.

Ownership: AO and/or Committee

Minimum number of Calendar Days: 13
Average number of Calendar Days: 24
Maximum number of Calendar Days: 35

- Review of and identification of the best candidates for interviews
- Develop interview questions specific to the position and conduct interviews; could be performed concurrently with previous Steps, but is based on the makeup of the Reviewer(s)
- Conduct reference checks
- Sign and return certificate identifying either:
  - Desired candidate
  - No desire to select any of the candidates

In terms of variation, this step is second behind to the internal COC review (Section 4.2.3); in terms of time delays in the hiring process, this step is the most debated. From the organizations observed, three distinct process paths were identified:

1) The AO is responsible for all steps in this process. Generally, interview questions are drafted prior to the start of the Cert delivery, vice upon receipt of the Cert as specified in the E2E Initiative. Upon completion of interview and reference checks, AO decides on a candidate (or not to select a candidate) and returns the Cert package to HR.

2) A co-located committee is formed to review the packages. A review board is scheduled and all members of the committee review the packages, determine which questions to ask, determine who will be present for the conduction of interviews. Upon completion of the one or multiple interviews, the committee votes and the AO identifies the candidate (or not to select a candidate) on the Cert and returns the Cert package to HR.

3) A non-co-located committee is formed to review the packages. The Cert packages are routed electronically or physically to each member who conducts their own review. A review board is scheduled and all members of the committee gather (some remotely) to discuss the applicants, determine which questions to ask, determine who will be present for the conduction of interviews. Upon completion of the one or multiple interviews, the committee votes and the AO identifies the candidate (or not to select a candidate) on the Cert and returns the Cert package to HR.
Case 1 is generally used for lower grade pay positions or positions that don’t have frequent contact with the organization’s upper echelon staff. Case 2 is the general case for the higher pay grades or white collar staff positions. Case 3 occurs where organizations like the VISN have need of a staff member with a particular background (i.e. Industrial Engineering) and may not have anyone with that experience on staff. An Industrial Engineer at another VISN might be requested to remotely sit on the board. When discussing time delays, OPM’s belief is that:

Many managers take an average of 37 days but sometimes as long as three months before they get around to interviewing job candidates, OPM said. And as thousands of résumés gather dust on desks, many of those job seekers lose interest in the federal government and take jobs at faster-hiring organizations. "When agencies over the last few months went through and identified some of the barriers to the timely hiring process, the résumés waiting on desks was the No. 1 reason.”

OPM concluded that many managers, trying to juggle numerous duties, put off résumé reviews, interviews and evaluations. They wait until a stack of résumés arrives in their in-boxes, and only then do they schedule times to assess and interview candidates, Bailey said. And if they have to coordinate schedules with other managers on a hiring panel, that compounds the scheduling problem. As a result, days become weeks, and weeks become months.

One HR director at a small agency, who asked not to be named, thinks OPM’s diagnosis is right on the money, but said simple suggestions won’t solve the problem. Managers are overstretched and need more employees to handle day-to-day matters so they can focus on managerial duties such as hiring.

Managers "have got to do that mission work, and they don't have the people to get the job done. It's a vicious circle," the HR director said. (Losey, OPM: New Hiring Rules Coming, 2009)

As shown by the analysis of data provided by the VA, the average is higher than the 15 day window set by the E2E Initiative, but lower than OPM is claiming. The following numbers (Table 6) were determined by reviewing over 180 job positions that progressed through the process:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Between Issuance and Return of Certificate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum (Days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Determined time between the issuance and return of the Cert to HR

The maximum and minimum values were calculated using the average and then adding or subtracting the standard deviation.
4.2.10: HR Processing and Tentative Job Offer

Ownership: HR Specialist, Director, Candidate, Service Chief

Minimum number of Calendar Days: 3
Average number of Calendar Days: 5
Maximum number of Calendar Days: 50

- Audit certificate for compliance with laws and regulations. 4
- Receive permission from Director to make the tentative offer.
- Extend a tentative job offer to selectee. 4
- Negotiate pay grade issues if required.
- Discuss with service alternate candidates if candidate declines offer.

Several sub-steps occur within this process that the E2E Initiative fails to consider. Upon receipt of the package back from the service, and upon completing the audit for compliance in selecting a candidate, the HR Specialist is required to send a note (e-mail) to the facility director (with the other applicable service chiefs and HR administrators Carbon Copied) requesting the “go-ahead” to contact the candidate and extend the tentative offer; inquiries into why this step was added, were responded to with “for budgetary reasons.” It is possible that the hiring process could be so prolonged, that the financial status of the care center could have changed since the Board originally agreed to proceed with the hiring process. Delays at this point were reported to range from none to over a month.

Once the Director has given approval, the offer is extended to the candidate. The candidate has the option to: 1) take the offer, 2) negotiate the offer, or 3) reject the offer. The first case is the simplest; the process proceeds on. In the second case, there are alternate paths illustrated in Appendix C, whereby the HR Specialist (with approval from the service) can 1) work to adjust the proposed pay, 2) work to get the candidate an incentive, 3) work towards getting a combination of the first two, or 4) with denial from the service, report that no additional pay will be authorized. In the event that the candidate declines the offer; the HR Specialist reports back to the Service and then proceeds to call the Services next recommended candidate.

The minimum time is therefore based on:

1) 1 day to receive the package from the service, complete the audit for compliance, send e-mail to the Director and get approval from the Director to proceed with the offer.
2) 1 day to contact the candidate, provide them the tentative offer, and allow them to decide.
3) 1 day to receive their acceptance and review the subsequent steps in coming onboard.

The maximum time is based on:
1) 1 day to receive the package from the service, complete the audit for compliance, and send e-mail to the director.
2) 30 days to receive response from the Director.
3) 1 day to contact the candidate, provide them the tentative offer, and allow them to decide.
4) 1 day to learn of desire for additional pay
5) 14 days to communicate requests to service, process through claims for additional pay
6) 1 day to inform candidate, receive their acceptance and review the subsequent steps in coming on board.

As a note, the 50 day value was only off by 1 day from the actual maximum time between Cert Return and tentative offer made (49 days).

The average time is based on the calculated average number of days between the date of Cert Return to HR and the date the tentative offer was made.

4.2.10: Post Acceptance Processing

Ownership: HR Specialist, HR Processing Staff, Medical Staff, Security Office, Candidate
Minimum number of Calendar Days: Varies
Average number of Calendar Days: Varies
Maximum number of Calendar Days: Varies

- Receipt, completion, and return of security/background questionnaires by candidate.
- Conduct administrative checks.
- Conduct local security/fingerprinting checks
- Medical Screening.
- Commence background security check if required.
- Professional Screening Board (PSB).
- Solicit, review and verify information from selectee such as DD-214, college transcripts, OF-306, Declaration for Federal Employment, etc. if not already provided with the initial application. 4
- Notify remaining candidates that a selection was made. 4

Just as with the previous step, several sub-steps occur within this process that the E2E Initiative fails to consider. The E2E Initiative’s only comment for this step is “Refer to the Security and Suitability Roadmap,” (Figure 18 below).
Suitability is a set of criteria by which the character and conduct of applicants and employees are assessed to assure that their Federal employment will protect the integrity and promote the efficiency of the Federal service. The security clearance criteria includes investigating and adjudicating the background of applicants and employees to determine their eligibility for access to classified information, as appropriate. (End-to-End Hiring Initiative, 2008)

The commencement of this step starts after the acceptance of the tentative offer, but during that same phone call. The HR Specialist informs the Prospective Employee (PE) of their duty status, future schedule, possible start dates, etc. Upon completion of the phone call, the HR Specialist can start and complete several of the simple background checks within minutes:

- List of Excluded Individuals/Entities (LEIE)
- Health and Human Services (HHS)
- Selective Service
- Healthcare Integrity and Protection Data Bank (HIPDB)

The HR Specialist also informs the PE of forms that need to be completed/submitted to the VA and additional steps in the hiring process. Among the forms are standardized background and security questionnaires and health screening forms. From interviews with the HR staffs, many times the applicants themselves fail to fill out the forms correctly, adequately, or in a timely manner resulting in further processing delays. The filling out of the forms was compared to “receiving a check in the mail that wasn’t signed by the sender; people know how to fill out a check, but they still make mistakes.” Other delays in filling out/returning forms revolve around traditional post systems; many times the forms are mailed, filled out, and then mailed back resulting in week-long turnaround times.

The second major delay comes from the medical processing. All positions require, at a minimum, a medical screening and TB test; the HR Specialist advises each PE during the tentative offer phone call what level of screening (basic screening or full physical) will be required and points-of-contact
to schedule all of the required physical tests. The medical screening is accomplished by completing the medical questionnaire and scheduling an appointment with a medical staff member to have them acknowledge the conditions specified on the form. The first portion of the TB test can be administered prior to that appointment, with the follow portion of the TB test being completed prior to, or on the day of the screening appointment. Several of the Title 5, Title 38, and Title 38H positions require full physical examinations. For the case of the VA in the Boston region, PE’s requiring physicals have to visit several different hospitals over the course of several different days. The timeline of one particular case is shown in Table 7 with the first column showing the number of days involved in the process and the second column showing the number of different locations an applicant has to visit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Section of Medical Screening Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Blood drawn, TB Test administered, physical screening form signed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>TB Test read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Psychological Test administered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>EKG Stress Test administered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Hearing Test administered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pulmonary Function Test administered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Review of Psychological Test and interview with doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>All test results come back satisfactorily; process continues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Full medical physical actual timeline

During the tentative offer phone call, the HR staff stresses that the candidates requiring physicals make their appointments as soon as possible due to the scheduling advances required.

The third major delay comes from some of the internally, and position specific, credential checks. In the case of the VA, this reference is for the VetPro system. VetPro is a “web-based credentialing system for Federal agencies that employ healthcare providers. It allows for accurate and complete credentials to be obtained once, electronically banked, and retrieved for review and updating in a secure web-based environment.” (National Institute for Health, 2003) Staff members with access to VetPro are scattered across the care center and are broken up into three groups: HR representatives, Service representatives, or Discipline representatives. There are two primary access levels for VetPro workers: 1) a level to initiate the VetPro entry process for a PE, and 2) a level to enter in that data on a PE is valid and has been verified.
While simple to use, the VetPro system requires a great deal of “up-and-back” routing of material: some electronic and some via regular post. The HR Specialist will inform the PE that a VetPro check will be required; however, as described above, one of the three groups will start the process. In some cases, if the Service has someone certified, they will start the process; in other cases, they may ask the Discipline which is responsible for the PE to start the process. If no-one else can, the service can ask HR to start the process. To start the process, the VetPro rep requires some background data on the PE. If they are not given that data by the Service or HR, a form is sent (either by mail or electronically) to the PE; upon completion, the PE returns the form to the VetPro rep. The VetPro rep then creates an account and, again via mail or electronic routing, sends a memo to the PE on how to populate the account; the account is populated with past employment histories, certification histories, educational histories, and references. There is no automated reply back to the VetPro rep when the PE has populated the VetPro account, so the rep has to periodically check the VetPro system to see when the PE has populated the account. Samples of the memos and forms that are sent up and back are included in Appendix E.

Once updated, the rep is then responsible for obtaining proof for each of the entries made by the PE. In the simplest of cases, for certain licenses and transcripts, proof can be obtained via online websites. In the more lengthy cases, like those of previous employments, a request has to be made via post as VetPro does not request e-mail/website data from the PE. When factoring in errors in data entry, like addresses of previous employers, the VetPro process has been known to last up to 6 months.

The fourth process, which in some cases is done concurrently with VetPro and other cases follows the VetPro check is the Professional Standards Boarding (PSB) process. It is the responsibility of the board to determine the final pay scale Step of the individual (as the CCU’s responsibility was to determine the GS Grade). In some cases, the routing and completion of the PSB paperwork can take an extensive period of time due to routing and re-routing of the paperwork (templates for the work seen in Appendix E) between the service and the discipline. Additionally, in some cases, the board may not be local and could require the packages to be sent to other locations, reviewed, approved, and returned. After being signed off by the board, there are additional signatures and processing required by the Director and HR staffs.

4.2.11: Official Offer and Acceptance
Ownership: HR Specialist, PE
Number of Calendar Days: 2
• Allow selectee to accept or decline job offer and make necessary arrangements with current employer.  

While there are some variations between the pre-requisites for jobs (i.e. nurses can be offered jobs before the PSB has determined a final pay step for them), in general, after all of the background checks have been completed, and the final pay Step has been determined, the final offer can be made.

4.2.12: Summary

The subsections of this chapter have detailed each observed major step in the hiring process for the VHA. If the calendar days from each of the subsections’ scenarios (minimum, average, and maximum) were added cumulatively, the following times would result (Table 8):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum Days</th>
<th>Average Days</th>
<th>Maximum Days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Cumulative timetable

However, as the case studies in the next chapter show, the times don’t necessarily add cumulatively. When walking through the substeps illustrated in Appendix C, different times apply to the different position scenarios.
Chapter 5: Case Studies

In this chapter, a series of three sets of case studies will be presented to show the best, average, and worst case hiring process times; this will provide the answer to the argument in question. The first case study will be for a common Title 5 position and the second for a higher level Title 5 position. The third case study will be for a Title 38H position.

5.1: Instance of Hiring a Miscellaneous Clerk

For the first case study, the position of a Miscellaneous Clerk (classified as Series 0303 by OPM), will be examined. Two scenarios will be observed: 1) an existing clerk has moved to a new position creating a vacancy, and 2) new responsibilities have been added to a department overloading the capabilities of the existing staff.

5.1.1: Scenario 1

5.1.1.1: Maximum Timeline

For the maximum time calculated, the following variations within the flow path were chosen:

- Maximum times listed on the model for each instance
- Instance where the existing clerk has reported that they are departing (i.e. vacancy flow path)
- Due to changes in the requirements of the position since the last clerk was hired, a modified PD was drafted
- With a modified PD, the facility’s Quad Board had to vote on the position
- As the PD was modified, the CCU had to classify it
- The DEU was used to publish the position’s advertisement.
- The Service Manager felt that the application packages had to be reviewed by committee as the clerk may be tasked with communicating with the director
- Due to the time since the package was first approved by the board, the budget had become constrained; the Director subsequently held off on approving the tentative offer phone call
- Additional documentation is mailed to PE
- Only a basic physical screening is required

As a result of the circumstances listed, the timeline to hire the clerk was 218 calendar days. The timeline and associated Gantt chart are posted as Appendix H.
5.1.1.2 Average Timeline

For the average time calculated, the following variations within the flow path were chosen:

- Minimum times listed on the model for each instance
- Instance where the existing clerk has reported that they are departing (i.e. vacancy flow path)
- No changes required to be made in the PD as it was modified and approved recently.
- Regardless of no changes to the PD, the Quad Board still has to vote on the hiring.
- As the PD was not modified, the CCU does not have to classify it
- HR was used to publish the position’s advertisement
- The Service Manager felt that the application packages could be reviewed by an AO
- Due to the time since the package was first approved by the board, the budget had become constrained; the Director subsequently held off on approving the tentative offer phone call
- Additional documentation is e-mailed to PE
- Only a basic physical screening is required

As a result of the circumstances listed, the timeline to hire the clerk was 88 calendar days. The timeline and associated Gantt chart are posted as Appendix H.

5.1.1.3 Minimum Timeline

For the minimum time calculated, the following variations within the flow path were chosen:

- Minimum times listed on the model for each instance
- Instance where the existing clerk has reported that they are departing (i.e. vacancy flow path)
- No changes required to be made in the PD as it was modified and approved recently.
- With no changes made to the PD, and the total number of clerks not changing, the Quad Board does not need to sign off on the package
- As the PD was not modified, the CCU does not have to classify it
- HR was used to publish the position’s advertisement.
- The Service Manager felt that the application packages could be reviewed by an AO
- As the timeline for the process was relatively short, the Director immediately grants approval to make the tentative offer. The resulting delay is only 1 day.
- Additional documentation is e-mailed to PE
- Only a basic physical screening is required

As a result of the circumstances listed, the timeline to hire the clerk was 61 calendar days. The timeline and associated Gantt chart are posted as Appendix H.
5.1.2: Scenario 2

5.1.2.1: Maximum Timeline

For the maximum time calculated, the following variations within the flow path were chosen:

- Maximum times listed on the model for each instance
- New responsibilities have been added to a department overloading the capabilities of the existing staff therefore analysis must be conducted and additional staff hired.
- Due to changes in the requirements of the position since the last clerk was hired, a modified PD was drafted
- With a modified PD and the increase in number of staff, the facility’s Quad Board had to vote on the position
- As the PD was modified, the CCU had to classify it
- The DEU was used to publish the position’s advertisement.
- The Service Manager felt that the application packages had to be reviewed by committee as the clerk may be tasked with communicating with the director
- Due to the time since the package was first approved by the board, the budget had become constrained; the Director subsequently held off on approving the tentative offer phone call
- Only a basic physical screening is required

As a result of the circumstances listed, the timeline to hire the clerk was 258 calendar days. The timeline and associated Gantt chart are posted as Appendix H.

5.1.2.2 Average Timeline

For the average time calculated, the following variations within the flow path were chosen:

- Average times listed on the model for each instance
- New responsibilities have been added to a department overloading the capabilities of the existing staff therefore analysis must be conducted and additional staff hired.
- No changes required to be made in the PD as the additional tasks fall within the ranges of topics covered by the existing PD.
- Regardless of no changes to the PD, the Quad Board still has to vote on the hiring as the number of staff is increasing.
- As the PD was not modified, the CCU does not have to classify it
- HR was used to publish the position’s advertisement
The Service Manager felt that a committee would be required to review the packages.

Due to the time since the package was first approved by the board, the budget had become constrained; the Director subsequently held off on approving the tentative offer phone call.

Only a basic physical screening is required. As a result of the circumstances listed, the timeline to hire the clerk was 119 calendar days. The timeline and associated Gantt chart are posted as Appendix H.

### 5.1.2.3 Minimum Timeline

For the minimum time calculated, the following variations within the flow path were chosen:

- Minimum times listed on the model for each instance.
- New responsibilities have been added to a department overloading the capabilities of the existing staff therefore analysis must be conducted and additional staff hired.
- No changes required to be made in the PD as the additional tasks fall within the ranges of topics covered by the existing PD.
- Regardless of no changes to the PD, the Quad Board still has to vote on the hiring as the number of staff is increasing.
- As the PD was not modified, the CCU does not have to classify it.
- HR was used to publish the position’s advertisement.
- The Service Manager felt that the application packages could be reviewed by an AO.
- As the timeline for the process was relatively short, the Director immediately grants approval to make the tentative offer. The resulting delay is only 1 day.
- Only a basic physical screening is required.

As a result of the circumstances listed, the timeline to hire the clerk was 77 calendar days. The timeline and associated Gantt chart are posted as Appendix H.

### 5.2: Instance of Hiring an Industrial Engineer

For this case, the position of an Industrial Engineer (classified as Series 0896 by OPM), will be examined. The scenario here will be that the VISN has decided that it is in need of an Industrial Engineer, where it did not have one before.

### 5.2.1: Maximum Timeline

For the maximum time calculated, the following variations within the flow path were chosen:
• Maximum times listed on the model for each instance
• Instance where the VISN Identifies the positional need
• As no PD exists for this position within the VISN, to meet the VISN’s needs, a new PD must be drafted
• The VISN Resource Board has to meet to decide on accepting the position
• As it is a new PD, the CCU had to classify it
• The DEU was used to publish the position’s advertisement.
• The package must be reviewed by committee; however, as the position is for an Industrial Engineer and there is no Industrial Engineer on staff, an Industrial Engineer from outside the VISN must be consulted.
• Additional documentation is mailed to PE
• Only a basic physical screening is required

As a result of the circumstances listed, the timeline to hire the engineer was 174 calendar days. The timeline and associated Gantt chart are posted as Appendix H.

5.2.2: Average Timeline

For the average time calculated, the following variations within the flow path were chosen:
• Average times listed on the model for each instance
• Instance where the VISN Identifies the positional need
• A position similar to the Industrial Engineer exists at another VISN; as the PD for that position was recently created, it can be modified to fit the needs of this VISN
• The VISN Resource Board has to meet to decide on accepting the position
• As it is a modified PD, the CCU had to classify it
• The DEU was used to publish the position’s advertisement.
• The package must be reviewed by committee; however, as the position is for an Industrial Engineer and there is no Industrial Engineer on staff, an outside representative must be involved in the board process. The person in the position for which the original PD was drafted is similar enough to the new position; therefore, that person can be used to sit on the board.
• Additional documentation is e-mailed to PE
• Only a basic physical screening is required

As a result of the circumstances listed, the timeline to hire the engineer was 123 calendar days. The timeline and associated Gantt chart are posted as Appendix H.
5.2.3: Minimum Timeline

For the minimum time calculated, the following variations within the flow path were chosen:

- Minimum times listed on the model for each instance
- Instance where the VISN Identifies the positional need
- A position identical to the Industrial Engineer exists at another VISN; the PD for that position can be reused
- The VISN Resource Board has to meet to decide on accepting the position
- As the PD is reused, the CCU does not have to classify it
- The DEU was used to publish the position’s advertisement.
- The package must be reviewed by committee and the previously hired Industrial Engineer at the other VISN will sit the board.
- Additional documentation is e-mailed to PE
- Only a basic physical screening is required

As a result of the circumstances listed, the timeline to hire the engineer was 56 calendar days.

The timeline and associated Gantt chart are posted as Appendix H.

5.3: Instance of Hiring an Physical Therapist

For the third case study, the position of a Physical Therapist (PT) (classified as Series 0631 by OPM), will be examined. The scenario will be that new responsibilities have been added to the Primary Care Service requiring a PT be added onto the Primary Care staff.

5.3.1: Maximum Timeline

For the maximum time calculated, the following variations within the flow path were chosen:

- Maximum times listed on the model for each instance
- New responsibilities have been added to the Service overloading the capabilities of the existing PT staff therefore analysis must be conducted and additional staff hired.
- Due to the wide range of responsibilities additionally being covered by the new PT, a modified PD was drafted, however, this is the first time the current staff has drafted the PT’s paperwork
- With a modified PD and the increase in number of staff, the facility’s Quad Board had to vote on the position
- As the PD was modified, the CCU had to classify it
HR was used to publish the position’s advertisement (as it is a Title 38H Position)
The application packages are reviewed by the Service Chief
Due to the time since the package was first approved by the board, the budget had become constrained; the Director subsequently held off on approving the tentative offer phone call
A full physical examination is required
VetPro screening and PSB processes are required to be completed prior to bringing PE on board

As a result of the circumstances listed, the timeline to hire the PT was 265 calendar days. The timeline and associated Gantt chart are posted as Appendix H.

5.3.2: Average Timeline
For the average time calculated, the following variations within the flow path were chosen:
- Average times listed on the model for each instance
- New responsibilities have been added to the Service overloading the capabilities of the existing PT staff therefore analysis must be conducted and additional staff hired.
- No new responsibilities have been added and the standard PD for a PT can be used, however, this is the first time the current staff has drafted the PT's paperwork
- With the addition of new staff, the facility's Quad Board had to vote on the position
- As the PD is reused, the CCU does not have to classify it
- HR was used to publish the position’s advertisement (as it is a Title 38H Position)
- The application packages are reviewed by the Service Chief
- Due to the time since the package was first approved by the board, the budget had become constrained; the Director subsequently held off on approving the tentative offer phone call for a minimal amount of time
- A full physical examination is required
- VetPro screening and PSB processes are required prior to bringing PE onboard

As a result of the circumstances listed, the timeline to hire the PT was 132 calendar days. The timeline and associated Gantt chart are posted as Appendix H.

5.3.3: Minimum Timeline
For the minimum time calculated, the following variations within the flow path were chosen:
- Minimum times listed on the model for each instance
- New responsibilities have been added to the Service overloading the capabilities of the existing PT staff therefore analysis must be conducted and additional staff hired.
- No new responsibilities have been added and the standard PD for a PT can be used; as the staff recently hired a PT, they are familiar with the PT paperwork requirements
- With the addition of new staff, the facility’s Quad Board had to vote on the position
- As the PD is reused, the CCU does not have to classify it
- HR was used to publish the position’s advertisement (as it is a Title 38H Position)
- The application packages are reviewed by the Service Chief
- As the timeline for the process was relatively short, the Director immediately grants approval to make the tentative offer. The resulting delay is only 1 day.
- A full physical examination is required
- VetPro screening and is required; however, the PSB can be conducted after the PE has been brought onboard

As a result of the circumstances listed, the PT would be able to start work in 78 days; however, with postponing the PSB until after the hiring, the final pay grade would not be finalized until 127 days after the start of the process. The timeline and associated Gantt chart are posted as Appendix H. The allowance to have the PSB completed after hiring varies based on facility/organization requirements and the position in question.

5.4: Case Study Summary

The results of the case studies are summarized in Table 9 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Clerk: Existing Position</th>
<th>Clerk: New Position</th>
<th>Industrial Engineer</th>
<th>Physical Therapist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Case study summary table

One key note about this table and the case studies is that these studies attempted to illustrate the maximum, average, or minimum timelines. In reality, any combination of the times (maximum, average, or minimum) is possible; for example, the PD process (of section 4.2.2) could be completed in the minimum time of 1 day, however, it could be coupled with a review process (of section 4.2.3) that could take the maximum time of 40 days. The usefulness of the developed map is that it will allow each organization to track where specifically, its delays are occurring.
Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

For this thesis, the model in Appendix C was developed to assist in showing that the inability to meet the 80 day time limit was not due solely to process repetition caused from inadequate PD development. From this tool, the sources, either individual or combination of steps or factors, were identified. Recommendations about the process could be generated to help reduce the delays; additionally, in observing the process, recommendations not pertaining directly to the timeline, but utilizing lean principles and standardization were also developed.

6.1: General Conclusions

The first two cases show that it is feasible to meet the 80 day window with the minimum timelines, while the average and maximum cases exceed this window. It is concluded that the inability to meet the 80 day window is due to the items on the following prioritized list beyond PD development issues:

- **Internal Review Processes.** Depending on the length of the review (both in number of steps and periodicity of leadership meetings), internal reviews can add one full calendar week to over a month onto the hiring process.

- **Medical Screening.** While simple medical screenings take little time, full physical screenings can add over a month onto the process. While the time to conduct the screening and report the results may take a longer time period than the internal review process, more positions have to be undergo the internal review process than require full medical screenings, therefore, this is ranked as the second leading delay factor.

- **Classification Processes.** While designed to expedite the process, packages can be held up for almost a month; it is expected that as new staff are trained up and the migration out of the facilities is completed, this delay will decrease.

- **Application Reviews.** Depending on the type of review and manning of review boards (AO versus Committee), the application review process can take longer than the allotted 15 day time period.

- **Package Handoffs.** From start to finish, a standard Title 5 position can be passed to 9 different people, with 17 handoffs. Depending on the frequency of checking e-mail/inboxes, staff out of the office, etc., this delay can range from minimal to extreme.
The second conclusion which can be drawn from the model is that the hiring process is a secondary priority behind budget control for the organization; this conclusion was drawn from observations of several steps within the process. The first step which flagged attention was the secondary approval by the Director to make the tentative offer. Even after the internal review at the commencement of the process, a step was added to the process to give the hospital director the opportunity to delay hiring an individual; as stated in section 4.2.10 this step was added "for budgetary reasons." The second observation was the lack of permissions for managers below the Quad level to authorize hiring; as the purpose of the Quad Board meeting is to determine which positions will be offered based on budgetary constraints, it is more important for the board (which may only meet once per month) to approve than to expedite the hiring process.

The next most significant conclusion is that a communications issue exists within the process. In addition to the discovery of the telephone game (and why the Service Manager/AO is sometimes contacted and other times not), there are communications breakdowns in informing all staff members who need to know when new personnel are brought onboard. The breakdowns result in unwarranted finger pointing, delays in establishing/meeting of the application committees, and confusion in preparing/tracking the PSB process.

Another significant conclusion is that determining timing averages for every step is impossible with the current tracking systems. The tracking data displayed in Appendix D starts only after HR has received the packaging. There was no data available from any of the Services as to when the Managers/Service Chiefs/AO’s actually started the process.

Next, were the conclusions drawn regarding the VA’s SWAT Team conclusions regarding managers: (Administration, 2010)

1. Lack of hiring managers' participation in outreach and recruitment of qualified candidates.
2. Lack of hiring managers' understanding of the hiring process and their role in it.
3. Hiring managers' lack of understanding and maximum use of recruiting strategies.
4. Lack of communications between Human Resources and hiring managers of the progress of the hiring process.
5. Lack of workforce planning awareness and the possible benefits of utilizing it to assist with staffing requirements.
6. The hiring process is not uniformly resulting in qualified candidates that meet the hiring managers' expectations.
7. The hiring process frequently fails to meet timeliness expectations of hiring managers.

Comments 1, 3, and partially 5 fell outside of the scope of this thesis. With regards to comment 2, when speaking with managers outside of the HR, there were common misconceptions about how the
hiring process worked. These misconceptions resulted in a great deal of finger pointing, blame being placed incorrectly, and a great deal of animosity towards the care facilities’ HR staffs. The hope of this thesis is that using the developed model, this lack of understanding can be eliminated.

Comment 4 is correct in that there is a lack of communication; however, the blame cannot be attributed only to Human Resources. As shown by the model, it is possible for a two-month window to exist whereby neither the Manager/Service Chief nor the care facilities’ HR Specialists actually have custody of the package. This is one of the key weaknesses of the E2E Initiative in that it groups the DEU Office, the CCU Office, and in later stages the facility’s Director’s Office as part of the HR Office. With all of these organizations involved, the communication chains breakdown. Additionally, as pointed out when working through the DEU, the DEU communicates with the HR Specialists, however, the HR Specialists don’t necessarily communicate back to the Services. While there are beneficial reasons for this, a means for communication relays between the three organizations (DEU, Service, and HR) should exist.

Comment 5 revolved more around the workforce planning phase, which occurs prior to the start of the hiring process; however, last minute policy changes/additions and workers giving limited departure notice, will still affect the organizations ability to plan ahead with its workforce planning. Another hindrance in the ability to plan ahead is, in some cases, the inability to start the hiring process in advance. For some positions, even when advanced notice of departure is provided, the Service Chiefs are not permitted to progress beyond certain steps hiring process. They must wait until the position is vacant before they can continue the process; this results in period of reduced capability for the Service. The conclusion is that lack of workforce planning awareness is not the only cause of delays in meeting staffing requirements.

There are several conclusions drawn which support comment 6. The first conclusion is that the PD’s submitted are not always accurate; there are several causes of this. The first cause is the desire to expedite the process. Having recently witnessed the process proceed for a DOD administrative position, the Service Chief has two options: 1) write an accurate PD which could require significant time spent in the internal review process and delays in classification (totaling a two month delay) or 2) use the existing PD, bypass the administrative steps, and possibly get a qualified individual more quickly. The second cause could be the manager’s limited time to focus on the hiring process and draft correct PD’s. Again, “Managers are overstretched and need more employees to handle day-to-day matters so they can focus on managerial duties such as hiring.” (Losey, OPM: New Hiring Rules Coming, 2009) It’s not an easily
answered question, but which takes higher priority: keeping a care facility running or hiring additional staff?

The second conclusion drawn about comment 6 is that if “hiring process is not uniformly resulting in qualified candidates,” then the tools used to screen the candidates aren’t effectively employed. As described by the Service Managers, the toolkits for questions have the standard responses from None to High level of experience. With possibilities ranging from candidates having the ability to misinterpret the questions to the questions not being specific enough, there is potential for the candidates to choose the High Level of experienced blocks incorrectly.

The third conclusion is that the posted advertisements might not accurately reflect the position in question, not just due to the PD (as described with the first conclusion of comment 6) but also, due to the organizations playing “the telephone game.” One of the comments received was that the job advertisement had been generated and posted without the service being informed. By procedure (as illustrated in Appendix C), this is correct. Once the service has turned the package over to HR, HR not the Service works directly with the DEU, to develop the advertisement. In the past, communicating with the service caused confusion; depending on who within the service answered the phone, the DEU would get different responses and priorities to its inquiries. It was therefore decided that the HR Specialist would be the point of contact for the DEU. As a result, the Service’s requirements could be misinterpreted by the HR Specialist, who in describing a position, could confuse the DEU representative resulting in an inaccurate advertisement.

The conclusion regarding comment 7 is that many of the managers are unsatisfied with the timeliness of the hiring process. The current process is currently taking “the government about five months on average to hire an employee.” (Losey, OPM: New Hiring Rules Coming, 2009) As many of the managers need people when they need them, (like in the case of the VBA needing people to process Post 9/11 GI Bill applications), waiting five months is too long.

6.2 E2E Hiring Process Specific Conclusions

This section proceeds through each of the E2E Initiatives sections and the conclusions drawn when compared with the actual model.

6.2.1: Validate Need

The conclusion is that 1 day will only be adequate if replacing a vacant position, and even then, it would be tight. With the need to justify every dollar spent, additional time may be required to prove...
the need. To generate paperwork and documentation for new or expanding positions, 1 day will not be enough.

6.2.2: Request Personnel Action and Review the Position Description

Each of these steps was assigned 1 day. The conclusion was that 1 day would only be adequate if the PD already existed and/or was only being slightly modified; this conflicts with the view that all PD’s should be tailored to meet the job specifics. A change to the PD will require an internal COC review and a classification by the CCU. Therefore the two days total will not be enough as the CCU requires two days at a minimum to receive and classify a package.

The second conclusion is that at this early stage, HR is not yet involved, as listed by the E2E Initiative. While other organizations may get HR involved earlier, this point is still prior to the internal review and would most likely still not have HR involved.

6.2.3: Confirm Job Analysis and Assessment Strategy

It is at this stage that the facilities’ HR office becomes involved. 5 days is an adequate time to confirm the job analysis, identify the assessment tool, and choose a ranking method.

6.2.4: Create and Post a Job Opportunity Announcement Including Identify Career Patterns

Two days is not a realistic time period for this step; only in less than 10% of the 90 cases reviewed was this step accomplished in two days or less. If the DEU is being used, time will be spent in 1) transmission, 2) the existing queue, 3) the time to draft the advertisement, 4) the time to send the benchmark paperwork back to the sending HR Specialist, 5) the time for them to review it, sign it, and resend it, 6) the time to receive it and then to post it.

The other conclusion is, again, that this step adds to the process confusion as the ownership is listed as Human Resources Office not the external HR agency of the DEU.

6.2.5: Receive Applications and Notify Applicants

According to the E2E Initiative, the maximum number of calendar days for this step should be 10. In going to the USAJobs Website, typing in Boston, and determining the average number of days for the first 50 jobs listed, the average equates to 14.2 (disregarding the two jobs that were open for over a year). It can therefore be concluded that the ten day window is incorrect as well. Additionally, the
ownership of “Human Resources Office” is only partially correct assuming the job is only posted internally by HR. Otherwise, this process is in the control of the DEU.

6.2.6: Close Job Opportunity Announcement

No time is listed for this step in the E2E Initiative as it is assumed that this step is automatic and instantaneous. It can therefore be concluded that this assumption is incorrect as, at up to two days after the closing of the job are allotted for the submission of documentation.

6.2.7: Evaluate Applications

Whether this step is completed by the care facilities HR office or by the DEU, 15 calendar days is adequate to process the applications.

6.2.8: Issue Certificate and Notify Eligibles

When combined with the previous step, 1 day is adequate to generate the letters from the various advertising sources and compile the packages from both HR and the DEU.

6.2.9: Review Applications, Schedule and Conduct Interviews, Check References, Make Selection and Return Certificate

The time allotted for this step is 15 days. As discussed, this window appears to be driven by the reviewer(s) schedules. On average, this process took 24 days with less than 50% of the Certs being returned 15 days or less. The conclusion is that either 15 days is not enough time or additional factors are inhibiting this step from being completed on time.

6.2.10: Tentative Job Offer and Acceptance

With the addition of the step to contact the facility Director, prior to making the offer, 1) the ownership of this step is not limited to the HR alone and 2) if the Director “sits” on the package or is absent for any duration of time, 3 calendar days will not be an adequate window to complete this step.

6.2.11: Initiate Investigation at the Appropriate Level for the Position to be Filled

While most of the local security/background checks can be completed in the listed 10 day time period, as can the completion of the physical questionnaire and TB test, if a more detailed background check (e.g. VetPro) or in depth (full) physical are required, 10 days will not be enough. Likewise, since
the Medical Staff will be involved in this step, it is concluded that they need to be added to the ownership for this step.

6.2.12: Official Offer and Acceptance

Other than increasing ownership of this step to the PE as well, 2 days should be adequate to inform the PE and receive a reply.

6.3: Recommendations

The recommendations are based on an analysis of the conclusions listed above and are provided to assist in managing the hiring process; they will be broken up into three categories: recommendations that can locally be applied to improve the hiring process, recommendations that require high level support or changes to nationwide systems to improve the hiring process, and recommendations which are based on observations but go beyond the hiring process.

6.3.1: Recommendations that can be accomplished in house

The first key recommendation to reducing the time to hire is for each organization to review and streamline the internal COC reviews.

Some [Housing and Urban Development (HUD)] program offices had as few as nine steps, but some had 13 steps just for a hiring official to get approval to fill a vacancy. We reduced that to no more than three. We essentially cut out people’s signatures.

HUD now requires only that a budget official confirm there is money to pay a new hire and that one or two organizational leaders agree a new employee is needed before the request moves forward. (Losey, How HUD cut its hiring times in half, 2010)

The issue discovered though, was that reducing the timeline is not just a function of reducing the steps; it’s a function of how the process works. As explained in section 4.2.3, in some cases, the review may only require three signatures, but it can still take up to 40 days. Reducing the number of signatures does eliminate some of the package handoff time; however, if obtaining the final signature can take up to 40 days, then the removal of the intermediary signatures deducts no time from the overall process. To streamline the process, each individual organization must determine who will be required to have final say on whether a package will be processed or not (i.e. delegation of hiring authority). If it is decided that the Quad Board must vote, then perhaps having more frequent personnel meetings (two or three times a month vice one) will aid in reducing the timeline. If it can be individuals in place of the board, then
those individuals must have the power to approve or disapprove a job and not have their
decision questioned or revoked (as per the secondary review discussed in section 4.2.10).

The next recommendation would be to coordinate the medical screening process better. As
illustrated in Table 7, a PE in the Boston area has to make 7 different trips to 4 different locations over
39 days to complete the Physical Exam. While the individual care facilities may not have all of
the required equipment for the full physicals, times could be allotted in a staggered manner to allow for
more of the tests to be conducted in a given day, at a given facility. For example, scheduling a block of
time in the early morning for blood drawing (which could be done at any facility) of PE’s, scheduling the
EKG Stress Test for the late morning, and the Pulmonary Test for the afternoon. Most facilities that I’ve
seen have either required appointments, or have a block of time assigned for “walk-ins” or applicants.
By staggering the walk-in times, a PE might be able to conduct several tests in one day vice one test over
multiple days.

Additionally, as a worst case scenario, the care facility might consider contracting out the
Physical Exam to a location (like a military installation’s clinic) which may be capable of accomplishing
one or all of the tasks in one day; the cost would be higher, but the process could be expedited by over a
month.

This recommendation is directed specifically at correcting the time and communication issues
with the PSB process, however, this recommendation could be expanded to encompass other areas of
confusion and delay. In the Submarine Force, numerous binders containing “Lessons Learned” data are
maintained. Almost every time an evolution is conducted, ambiguity about a specific step raises
questions or a better way to conduct a step is discovered. These “Lessons Learned” are documented
and maintained such that the next time the evolution is to be conducted, which may be with a
completely different staff, those lessons can be incorporated into the preparatory brief to reduce
ambiguity and improve the process from the previous time conducted.

In the cases of Toyota or other standardized manufacturers, who carry out processes on a cyclic
basis (e.g. manufacturing a car door every minute), these ambiguities are immediately resolved or
improvements are immediately made to the process. In the case of the hiring process, which is non-
standardized, these evolutions may be conducted by a Service only every several years. For example,
the Primary Care service may decide that it needs an Occupational Therapist (OT). They may never have
hired an OT before, or may have hired one several years ago, and the staff that filled out the Boarding paperwork (as discussed in section 4.2.10) may have moved on to other positions.

Of the Disciplines spoken with, each maintains their own templates and notes on documents, however, these notes are generally stored in non-universally accessible files; the data may be stored in the Sharepoint Network system, however, only the OT’s may be able to access the OT Lessons Learned files due to the placement of security firewalls. Since the Primary Care Service Manager (who isn’t an OT) can’t access these files, it doesn’t do them any good.

As such, a universally accessible Lessons Learned database for the PSB process would eliminate many of the reoccurring issues seen by the HR Specialists, which result in numerous loops (and time delays) of resubmitting corrected data forms.

Additionally, within this “Lessons Learned” file, all of the points of contact about a given job would be listed. As illustrated on the model, the PSB process has many initial alternate paths based on who processes and who reviews which paperwork. At times, key people, not necessarily in the review process but in follow-on administrative processes, aren’t informed about new staff. The first document in the Lessons Learned file should be a point-of-contact matrix. The recommended design of this matrix would be as follows: The X axis would list the facility’s Services; the Y axis would list the Disciplines. Contained in each block of the matrix would be an e-mail distribution list with all points-of-contact who should be informed when a new individual is hired; with all appropriate people being informed, time would not be lost trying to figure out “who people are when they show up at people’s doors.”

A template or outline for this file has been created in Appendix G. Initially, each Discipline would be responsible for submitting the data to populate the files. Thereafter, as the HR Specialists process the Board packages, and errors are found, these errors would be added to the “List of Commonly Made Errors.” When the next Service fills out a package, they can identify past errors to not make the same mistakes twice.

Next, as detailed in the time breakdowns in Chapter 4, no time tracking data could be identified prior to the packages’ arrival at HR; the recommendation is that HR begin to track this data so subsequent performance metrics can be generated. While HR may not become involved in the hiring process until up to almost two months into the process, the internally developed, routing coversheets (e.g. Appendix E-1) are filled out by the AO’s on the first days of the process. By adding a matrix like the one seen below to Appendix E-1, timeline data can be obtained from the time package development commences.
In the “Del. To:” box, the initials or title of the person being given the package is entered (e.g. “J.S.” or “Serv Mgr”); boxes are provided for the date and initials for when and who delivered the package to the next person.

It was clearly understood that the AO’s and Manager’s were not qualified experts at OPM processes; as such, it was understood that they were not qualified to draft up the JOA packages. While they do have the opportunity to include their initial thoughts on the package submission coversheets for KSA’s (as seen in Appendix E-1), having them start drafting the KSA’s might further reduce the time spent in preparing the package once HR receives it. During the period when the package is undergoing internal review and/or classification, the managers can begin work on drafting the analysis toolkits. While they may not fill the packages out in accordance with OPM standards, the following benefits may be obtained:

- With the advanced notice that the package is coming and, if the existing workload can support additional efforts, HR can begin to do some preliminary research on the package. Without investing too much time into a package that may or may not come to fruition, the HR Specialist can begin to research and work with the Services to develop the KSA’s and Analysis Toolkit. Rather than waiting for the package to arrive and then start work, this work can be done in advance, resulting in a shorter timeline.
- Greater communication between HR and the Services. HR will have advance notice of the packages’ arrival and know who to immediately inform once the package arrives at HR; this would decrease the frustration felt by participants of the process.
- By doing more of the work themselves, the Services might identify KSA’s and analysis tools which the HR Specialists, in trying to develop the toolkit within the allotted period might not come up with. While the Services review the job analyses and toolkits before HR passes them to DEU or drafts the advertisement themselves, in drafting the job analyses themselves, the Services may better explain what they want the applicants to be capable of, thus improving the quality of the advertisements.

While proving to be less a factor than originally considered, it is still recommended that a review of the paperwork (data flow) be reviewed by the organization. The first note regarding paperwork was
the redundancy in the type of locally generated forms. Appendices E-12 and E-13 show the Boarding process coversheets for Nurses and for generic Title 38 positions. In comparing the two, side-by-side, they were discovered to be almost identical. Merging these forms into one could help to simplify the amounts and types of paperwork the HR Specialists have to sort through. The second note regarding paperwork dealt with the VetPro system. As VetPro is an older computer program which predates e-mail, when asking for contact data for the PE’s references, the program has entry blocks for phone numbers and addresses, but not for e-mail addresses; however, “Additional Data” blocks are provided.

The letters attached as Appendices E-7 and E-8 are samples of the letters sent to PE’s to start them along the VetPro path. Appendix E-7 is the letter that is recommended to be sent by the system itself; appendix E-8 is the letter that incorporates E-7’s data and was designed to resolve common ambiguity causing the PE frustration. As E-8 is already a modified letter, it could be further modified to ask the PE’s to enter in the references’ e-mail address in the “Additional Data” section. If the reference forms could be e-mailed to the references and subsequently e-mailed back, vice relying on paper and traditional mailing systems, additional time and expenditures for postage could be saved.

A final recommendation for this section, which will not affect the timeline but will affect morale, is for each organization (care facility and VISN) to ensure its entire staff understands the hiring process. When informally discussing the hiring process with staff below the level of manager, many of them were unaware as to how the process worked; this lack of knowledge resulted in bitterness and finger pointing. When a vacancy occurs or new, additional requirements are distributed to the divisions, the responsibilities of accomplishing the tasks fall on the “deckplate” workers. From their vantage point, the workload has increased and it could take months before additional help arrives. Without having an understanding of the process, the blame and bitterness of the working staffs then fall on HR, as HR is responsible for hiring new staff. By walking them through the process and having them understand what is actually happening, they may not like it, but they will understand that the delays aren’t due to the laziness or lack of caring from the HR staff.

Prior to conducting the training with the Service staffs, it is important that the individual care facilities and VISN’s adequately map out the internal COC review process using the format utilized for the model in Appendix C. As discussed in section 4.2.3, an open box was left in the model due to the diversity of the internal reviews. It is therefore vital to making the model as accurate as possible for each organization, to map out how their internal review process works and how long each step can take.
Leaving the model in its current state would be similar to showing the E2E Initiative model which doesn’t accurately map the process and timeline.

6.3.2: Global Recommendations that require high level VA and/or OPM support

The first global recommendation is that each care facility or organization (in the case of the VISN), has to determine which the higher priority is: timeliness of hiring or budget; once that decision is made, additional support is necessary from the higher levels of the VA. The major delays in the hiring process are due to internal reviews and re-reviews stemming from budgeting concerns. One possible solution to correct for this is to develop a standardized facility or organizational manning chart to determine the number of staff necessary and then having the higher level VA management pre-allocation funds to those jobs; with funding becoming tighter and tighter, there may be the urge at the local facilities to utilize the funds for upgrades and maintenance vice new staff acquisition. This recommendation is incredibly difficult to implement and requires a great deal of additional work to be accomplished. One such path to accomplish this task is explained below:

1) First, a series of metrics for each of the jobs needs to be created. This can be developed using parametric style relationships. Examples would be developing a metric for the number of janitors in a hospital based on the square footage of the hospital or number of nurses required based on the number of hospital beds.

2) Next, funding for those positions would be specifically allocated such that there can be no question as to how that money is to be utilized. This inhibits the scenario whereby staff funding is used for repairs or other such items.

3) When new requirements are assigned to division, (i.e. additional maintenance requirements for facilities staff or additional patrols for police forces), the authority itself will reassess the manpower requirements and determine the minimum staff levels. This minimizes the amount of time required by the local service managers to validate need.

Not all staff funding would or could be accounted for in this manner, however, for some of the basic, standard services, this could be used to ensure minimal manning levels. In the case whereby funding is allotted for five janitors, and one retires, the manager can bypass all levels of internal review (and thereby bypass the delays) to expedite the hiring process; with the funding already locked in and available, no questions will arise by the local COC.
Second, making the classification process concurrent with the internal review process would reduce the overall time for the hiring process. With time lags due to the hiring/training of new CCU members and the migration of the classification members out of the individual care facilities, there is currently a backlog of packages within the CCU. Therefore, since both processes are currently taking the same amount of time, if they were run concurrently, the total time the process takes could be reduced by up to one half. The arguments against this recommendation are as follows: by running the CCU steps and the internal review steps concurrently

- The number of packages seen by the CCU will increase, resulting in an increased lag time. As the internal review process acts as a filter by screening out jobs that the budget can’t support, those packages never go before the CCU. When run concurrently, these packages may make it to the CCU before the internal review process denies them, resulting in wasted time by the CCU.

- The PD’s and job requirements might change after the CCU has already classified them, resulting in additional time being spent reclassifying them.

As with the first recommendation, a decision has to be made on which is more factor is more important: reducing time in the hiring process or morale and well being of the CCU workers; having them spin their wheels to work as fast as possible, only to find out that their time has been wasted will not be good for the organization. Perhaps sending the package to the CCU after the respective Quad member has reviewed it (but the total board has not yet approved) is the equitable answer.

This recommendation is designed to eliminate the “telephone game” between the DEU, HR, and the Service. Upon receipt of the package by the DEU, an automated reply is sent to the sender (generally only HR) announcing the package’s receipt. To eliminate the telephone game the following suggestions are proposed:

1) The automated reply includes an estimated wait time for the package to be processed. The automated system can tally the number of packages in the holding queue and inform the specialist when the package is expected to be processed. By providing the estimated lag time, the Specialist can coordinate with the appropriate Service members to establish a conference time to discuss the proposed DEU advertisement.

2) Upon commencement of processing the package, the DEU agent’s first action would be to inform the HR Specialist that they have begun to process the package and their estimated time to develop the advertisement. This action places additional burden on the DEU agent, but, will allow for the establishment of a more accurate conference time with the Service representative(s).
DEU agent takes the next package off of the queue and sees that it is for a unique position and will take at least two days to develop. They can inform the HR Specialist of the expected completion time and establish a conference call for three days in the future. The HR Specialist can then inform the Service of the conference call and enable them to sit in and to provide input.

While either of these two actions adds in additional time to the timeline (by having the formal three-way conference call), it can help eliminate the cycle of posting a bad advertisement, getting unqualified applicants, and then having to revise and repost the advertisement.

One additional benefit of getting the Service representative involved is that it allows advance notice for the Service to coordinate the review committee meeting time. As seen in the data provided by the VA, in extreme cases, the processing time for the DEU to prepare and publish an advertisement can range from one day to over a month. Additionally, in some cases, the only way the service finds out a job has been posted is by periodically searching for their own position on USAJobs; by the time they learn it has already been posted, it may be too late to conveniently schedule the appropriate review committee. This advance notice can give adequate time to select committee members based on availability and subsequently develop committee priorities in advance.

This recommendation is for the future revisions to the E2E Initiative. One recurring comment throughout this thesis has been the grouping of organizations under a single hat; this has the effect of masking delays in hand-offs between organizations. The recommendation is that in future revisions of the E2E Initiative, the individual organizations involved be spelled out. In the case of the “Human Resources Organization,” it should be clearly specified that the DEU, the CCU, or the HR Specialist is involved. Likewise, within the internal COC review, it should be clearly denoted that the “Manager” is not the only participant in the process; whether it’s the Quad Board or the VISN Resource Board, there are additional hands and additional wait periods added by each of these boards.

6.3.3: Recommendations beyond the hiring process

This recommendation is designed to resolve one of the issues OPM had discussed: manning retention. While the issue of retention is one in the post-hiring phase, a potential solution to the quitting of personnel shortly after being hired can be addressed in the interview step in the hiring process. One of OPM’s concerns was that personnel, who accept positions within the government, discover that the job wasn’t what they thought it would be; as a result, they quit shortly after being hired.
In reviewing OPM’s “Structure Interviews: A Practical Guide,” a great deal of data is offered (checklists, templates, etc.), on how to organize the interview, but there is no stressing on the concept of actually discussing the PD or advertisement. As discussed in section 4.2.2, the PD’s list all potential job requirements, not necessarily the day-to-day evolutions. As discussed in section 4.2.6, because of the “telephone game,” the advertisement may not be clearly specifying the job requirements. The recommendation to alleviate this issue is to add in to OPM’s interview guide the requirement to review the advertisement/PD with the candidates to ensure that the day-to-day actions of the job are clear. Currently, the only statement in the guide is: “Briefly describe the job and relevant organizational characteristics to allow candidates to become comfortable in the interview setting.” (US Office of Personnel Management). Emphasis is clearly placed on making the candidate comfortable vice ensuring the candidate understands what exactly they are applying for. Perhaps even having someone else who is experienced at that particular job (i.e. an actual janitor, nurse, etc.) present at the interview to speak in laymen’s terms would be better.

By making the discussion of what the job entails a requirement of the interview, one cause of the loss of staff could be eliminated.

6.4: Future Research

In writing this thesis, one key area where insufficient data existed was found: the number of positions which actually meet the entering applicability requirements for the E2E Initiative. As touched on in section 3.2, the Hiring Process details assumptions which limit the number of positions which fall under the 80 day timeline to those that: “workforce planning and recruitment processes are completed (for example: positions are developed, validated, approved for resourcing, classified, position description is established and the appropriate assessment tools are developed prior to initiating the request for personnel action).” (End-to-End Hiring Initiative, 2008) For all of the managers spoken to, none of them had attempted to fill positions that actually met these criteria; they all had to either develop their own positions, go through the internal review process regardless of position type, etc. An interesting study would be to determine what percentage of the positions filled by the VHA actually meets the E2E applicability criteria and if this percentage turns out to be as low as anticipated, it could be in the best interests of the VA to determine a baseline separate from the E2E initiative.
References


Targets, D. E. Strategic Objective 4-7 (Page 11 of 16).


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 (31 JUL 2010)</td>
<td>Submitted application to VA; received automated e-mail response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Called VA Benefits hotline phone number; received automated phone message that up to 6 week delays would be expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Spouse's college funding due date; forced to write check to cover tuition otherwise wife would not be allowed to start class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Called VA Benefits hotline phone number. I was told no record of my wife's package existed; it was lost. Gave package submission number and was told that no process had been made. Customer service rep said he would flag the package and someone would contact me in the next week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>No call back; I called VA Benefits hotline phone number. I was told that the customer service rep did not have the authority to flag any package nor could he direct someone to call me back. I asked for an updated status and was told that they could only give that information to my wife (even though they gave it to me 2 weeks before. I asked for a supervisor and was told one would have to call me back in 48-72 days later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Supervisor called back; explained that there was actually a 14 week delay. Explained that staff members can't provide information without a signed consent form. Mailed consent form to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Scanned consent form in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~14</td>
<td>Called back at 14 weeks; no change in package status. Spoke to supervisor; supervisor said the delay was with the Navy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~14</td>
<td>Called up the Navy's Education and Training Command; Navy Rep told me the Navy had nothing to do with the GI Bill. Said he would call his POC in the VBA to find out status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~14</td>
<td>Called back the next day and was told that they would look into it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~14</td>
<td>Received certificate for funding from VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~14</td>
<td>Brought form to Spouse's University; University filled out applicable information in online form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~20</td>
<td>Called university; funds not received. Had to submit funding for 2nd semester.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~20</td>
<td>Called VA; was told that form was received and was being processed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~22</td>
<td>Called VA; was told that funding had been received by Lesley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~22</td>
<td>Called University; university varified receipt of funds.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Between week 9 and week 22, data is from memory*
Appendix B: End-to-End Initiative

Attached as Appendix B are the two sections of the E2E Initiative which will be discussed in this thesis.
WORKFORCE PLANNING ROADMAP

Workforce Planning

- 7 functions
- 52 weeks

- Set Strategic Direction
- Analyze Workload Supply & Demands
- Develop Competency Action Plan
- Implement Plan
- Monitor - Maintain Records (Continuous)
- Evaluate - Measure (Quarterly)
- Adjust Plan (as required)
OVERVIEW

Workforce planning is a major component of strategic human capital management. It is defined as the systematic process for identifying and addressing the gaps between the workforce of today and the human capital needs of tomorrow. Workforce planning is based upon a set of workforce analyses which provide insight into how agencies can align their workforce to meet human capital goals and objectives that link to the agency’s mission and strategic objectives.

Effective workforce planning enables the organization to: 1) link workforce requirements directly to the agency’s mission and strategic and annual business plans; 2) develop a comprehensive picture of where gaps exist between competencies the workforce currently possesses and future competency requirements; 3) identify and implement gap reduction strategies, especially for mission critical occupations; 4) make decisions about how best to structure the organization and deploy the workforce; and 5) identify and overcome internal and external barriers to accomplishing strategic workforce goals.

Identifying workforce requirements requires a top-down approach beginning with the agency’s strategic objectives. Analysis must include consistent, reasoned criteria and methods for determining and validating the positions’ required skills, grades, types and locations.

The development of practical workforce strategies to include recruiting, retention and shaping requires the participation of executive leadership, management, employees, and agency staff responsible for financial management and acquisition as well as human resources. A good workforce planning process also will have a comprehensive communication plan and change management mechanisms in place as tools to allow agency personnel to adjust recruiting and retention strategies relative to possible changes in mission and/or resourcing.

Workforce planning is also an essential tool for aligning budget allocations to human resources requirements so organizations can meet their strategic objectives. The workforce planning process has multiple steps and is a continuous, cyclical process that must begin well before the new budget execution cycle. The workforce planning process is designed for execution in sequence as each step informs the next. For practical purposes it is necessary to begin some steps prior to completion of the next step, and to align execution of steps with the budget planning and execution timeline.

Workforce planning is an essential piece of the hiring process. But it is not a stand alone component; as previously stated, it must be correctly done up front if the other four components of the hiring process are to be effective. Once the workforce planning phase is complete, it must be effectively managed as it will impact the subsequent related hiring components.

ASSUMPTIONS

- Workforce planning is used as the keystone to an effective and efficient recruiting and hiring program
- Workforce planning is an ongoing process tied to budgetary decision making
- Agency Strategic Plan is current
• Agency has dedicated workforce planners who are trained and competent on use of workforce analysis

• Workforce planning is conducted in concert with other agency staff functions (budget, human resources, operations, logistics, facilities, information technology (IT), other)

• The current workforce competencies are validated. If competencies are not validated, additional time will be needed to adequately develop, assess and validate the competency model

• There will be variation in the time needed to accomplish tasks due to the following:
  o Executive interest and message to agency, workgroup, etc.
  o Expertise in workforce planning
  o Size of agency

CHALLENGES

• Inadequate analysis tools or systems

• Lack of workforce planning competencies and expertise

ELEMENTS AND TASKS

Set Strategic Direction (6 months prior to beginning of fiscal year (FY), 4-6 weeks duration) - Align the workforce planning process with the agency’s strategic plan, annual performance and business plans and work activities.

Ownership: Executive and mid-level management, Human Resources Office

• Obtain leadership commitment to include champion at executive level

• Set mission, vision and objectives with emphasis on integrating agency and component level organization perspectives

• Identify organizational direction and ensure that all supporting plans and documentation link to workforce planning efforts:
  o Agency Strategic Plan
  o Human Capital Plan
  o Recruitment Plan (agency branding efforts, staffing plan, Career Patterns analysis, hiring flexibilities, incentives)
  o Succession Plan (mission critical occupations, key leader)
  o Career Pattern analytical tool

• Identify roles and responsibilities:
  o Define and integrate Human Resources as a strategic partner
  o Have a process for soliciting and receiving input from line managers, team leaders and key workforce planning staff
- Identify current processes and conduct risk assessment to include barrier analysis

- Develop Workforce Planning System and Processes:
  - Workforce Plan should be completed 90 days prior to fiscal year.
  - Workforce plan is integrated with the budget cycle (year of execution and at least one budget year).
  - Ensure workforce requirements are appropriately prioritized and all necessary funding and resources are in place to execute the plan and document unfunded requirements and impacts.

- Identify desired results of workforce planning system:
  - Make the business case for workforce planning.

- Set measures for organizational performance.

**Best Practice:** Create a Strategic Workforce Planning Team made up of key personnel from different organizational levels.

**Analyze Workforce Data and Identify Skill Gaps (6 months prior to beginning of FY)** - Analyze the current workforce and then compare needs against available skills.

Ownership: Managers, Human Resources Office

- Analyze current state of workforce to answer two basic questions, “Who works for the organization today?” and “What skills, and at what strength and proficiency levels, exist in the organization’s current workforce?”

- Conduct baseline assessment:
  - Population: total workforce, organizational composition, series, grade/band, etc.
  - Workforce projections: accessions/separations, transfers, retirement, turnover/attrition, termination, retention.
  - Consider the many variables regarding workforce demographics.

- Analyze future state of the workforce:
  - Develop workforce requirements (this becomes the foundation for developing the position descriptions).
  - Future considerations, such as labor trends, market shifts, economic factors, educational trends, technology changes, competitive sourcing, hard to fill jobs, bench strength of workforce and reorganizations.
  - Develop forecast models of both best case scenarios and worst case scenarios.
  - Identify mission critical occupations such as; IT, Human Resources Management and Acquisition.
Complete the Career Patterns checklist to ensure agency talent needs are identified.

- Conduct workforce competency assessment (the identified competencies are derived from job analysis):
  - Review mission, strategy and trend data to develop competency models for mission critical occupations.
  - Work with senior agency and program leadership to refine and select strategic competencies.
  - Review positions to identify where those competencies are required.
  - Assess current workforce against required competencies, including desired proficiency levels for each position.
  - Use competency assessment results to analyze the gaps between current workforce and identified needs.
    - Use “future state” analysis to consider evolution of current workforce into the future, including changes in demand and supply.
    - The results of this phase will help develop strategies to manage the future workforce to meet mission requirements.
    - Validate and utilize assumptions for scenario building.
  - Forecast hiring needs by number and occupation (skill) and develop strategies for a proactive approach to meeting projected vacancies.
  - At this point, agencies may:
    - Get pre-approval from upper management for proactive recruitment to required/approved levels of hiring.
    - Develop a system for tracking hiring against vacancies as per the approved hiring plan.

- Complete job analysis (performed in the Workforce Planning process by the Human Resources Office).
  - Create position description.

- Assess risk level and sensitivity level for the position.

Develop Competency Action Plan (6 months prior to beginning of FY) - Identify strategies to close gaps, plans to implement the strategies and measures to assess strategic progress
Ownership: Manager, Human Resource Office

- Develop plan to close competency gaps:
  - Create strategies, implementation actions and timelines to close the gaps.
  - Identify plan stakeholders and responsibilities (who does what and when).
  - Identify critical success factors, measures and risks.
  - Identify strategies to close competency gaps including recruitment, training, redeployment, mentoring and other initiatives.
  - Set milestones against which to periodically assess the plan to ensure objectives are being achieved.

- Develop Human Resources infrastructure and program support to implement the actions.
  - Recruitment Plan: agency branding efforts, staffing plan, identify Career Patterns, identify hiring flexibilities, incentives.
Develop communications strategy.

**Tip:** The workforce plan will include a number of strategies for addressing talent management issues. For instance agencies may choose to close competency gaps through recruitment, training and development, business process reengineering, etc, all of which may require a separate action plan that includes associated resourcing issues.

**Implement (beginning of FY)** - Ensure human and fiscal resources are in place, roles are understood and the necessary communication and coordination occur to execute the plan and achieve strategic objectives.

Ownership: Managers, Human Resources Office

- Develop an implementation strategy for the workforce plan:
  - Ensure that all roles are clarified
  - Establish timelines and milestones
  - Provide for accountability as appropriate

- Communicate the workforce plan (continuous—not a one-time effort).

- Obtain organizational buy-in:
  - Executive level buy-in
  - Consider using pilot initiatives to test innovative methods and approaches as well as manage change
  - Establish reconciliation mechanism to compare the plan against actual results during implementation
  - Revise based on feedback from managers, workforce and other stakeholders

**Monitor (during workforce plan implementation)** - Observe, review and monitor program activities and internal and external developments that may affect the action plan

Ownership: Managers, Human Resources Office

- Monitor progress against milestones and measures

- Adjust plan as needed to address new workforce issues resulting from changes in mission priorities or resourcing posture

- Assess for continuous improvement purposes
**TIP:** The following questions may help to determine effectiveness of the strategies:

- Are there any needed adjustments to the plan and strategies?
- Were the strategies completed?
- Are the assumptions of the need and supply analysis still valid?
- Have there been any new workforce and organizational issues that have occurred?
- Did you meet your projected business outcomes?

**Evaluate (quarterly)** - Assure linkage of workforce planning to accountability system and processes

Ownership: Managers, Human Resources Office

- Assess outcomes against indicators to determine success, lessons learned and failures
- The agency’s plan is evaluated by internal stakeholders for effectiveness and to determine if adjustments are required
- Address new workforce and organizational issues
- Monitor progress against milestones
- Assess for continuous improvement purposes

**Adjust Plan (as required)** - Make adjustments to plan to address all relevant issues

Ownership: Managers, Human Resources Office

**MEASURES**

Percentage of managers reporting they have the information needed to make effective decisions regarding staffing requirements.

Percentage of annual staffing projection (number and required competencies) achieved (Source: Annual Human Capital Management Report and Systems, Standards and Metrics, Mission Critical Occupation Resource Chart).
The number of days for each step within the 80-day Standard is based on agencies using E2E Roadmap as an integrated strategy and agency best practices. Agencies may need to adjust the number of days for each step within the 80-days based on their particular practices and procedures.
OVERVIEW

The hiring process begins well before a job ever materializes. It effectively incorporates the full E2E experience, including numerous tasks associated with Workforce Planning, Recruitment, Security and Suitability and Orientation. The success of the hiring process is dependent on the effectiveness and efficiency of the workforce planning and recruitment components. By ensuring position descriptions are systematically reviewed for currency and relevance to ever-changing mission requirements, managers can proactively plan for vacancies and potential shifts in the composition of their workforce.

Effectively attracting and evaluating candidates drives many of the components within the hiring process. It is imperative that management coordinate and openly communicate with the Human Resources Office and vice-versa. Decisions such as use of the various hiring flexibilities, ranking procedures and assessment instruments should be discussed well in advance of any job as part of an overall hiring strategy. Sound job analysis is imperative and establishes the foundation of any hiring effort, thereby impacting recruitment strategies, job announcements, qualification requirements and assessments.

The variety of application procedures and automated staffing tools used throughout Government significantly challenges developing a standard hiring process. However, even under these current conditions progress can be made. The hiring process consists of some very definitive steps based on legal and regulatory requirements based on clearly described merit principles. With advanced planning, as well as effective use of technology and communication tools, considerable improvement can be achieved.

ASSUMPTIONS

- The Federal Government’s “Pledge to Applicants” is applied.
- The hiring process is designed for filling positions with new hires from outside the Federal Government into the competitive service under the agency’s delegated examining authority (5 USC 1104(a)(2). It was not designed for filling positions under merit promotion procedures.
- Workforce planning and recruitment processes are completed (for example: positions are developed, validated, approved for resourcing, classified, position description is established and the appropriate assessment tools are developed prior to initiating the request for personnel action).
- Merit system principles are maintained. These principles are located at http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=browseusc&docid=Cite:+5USC2301.
- Veterans’ preference requirements are followed. Information on veterans’ preference can be found on OPM’s website at http://www.opm.gov/veterans/.
• The hiring process is designed for filling positions with open and close dates other than an open continuous announcement.

• Hiring flexibilities such as Direct-Hire Authority are outside of this process.

• An automated staffing system is in place and operational.

**CHALLENGES**

• Availability of trained human resources staff conducting various steps of the hiring process.

• Availability of managers dedicated to engage in the hiring process, beginning with reviewing workforce requirements, staffing and recruiting plans in order to select individuals best suited for the position.

• Obtaining buy-in on revised procedures from all stakeholders, including management officials, human capital practitioners, employees and the like.

**ELEMENTS AND TASKS**

**Validate the Need against the Workforce, Staffing and Recruiting Plans**

Ownership: Manager

Maximum number of calendar days: 1

• Review workforce, succession and staff acquisition plans.

• Review recruitment plan to identify the resources and sources for recruitment.

• Understand the skills gap in the organization.

**Request Personnel Action (RPA) to Fill Job**

Ownership: Manager

Maximum number of calendar days: 1

• Create RPA (SF-52) to fill the position.

• Obtain approval of the RPA (SF-52).

* The number of days for each step within the 80-day standard is a suggested timeframe. Agencies may need to adjust the number of days for each step while keeping within the 80-day standard for end-to-end hiring.
Helpful Hint: Develop and use a “Hiring Contract” between the manager and the Human Resources Office that spells out each party’s responsibility and timeframe for filling the job.

Review the Position Description

Ownership: Manager, Human Resources Office

Maximum number of calendar days: 1

- Review position description for currency and accuracy of the duties and occupation.
- Identify changes to the position.
- Verify risk level designation.
- Verify sensitivity level/clearance eligibility.

Helpful Hint: Use the Position Designation System developed by OPM when it is released in final form, to aid in determining sensitivity level/clearance eligibility. In the interim, continue to apply the current Position Designation System, to aid in determining sensitivity level/clearance eligibility.

Confirm Job Analysis and Assessment Strategy

Ownership: Manager, Human Resources Office

Maximum number of calendar days: 5

- Confirm Job Analysis:
  - Identify the critical duties and responsibilities of the job.
  - Identify the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) or competencies required to perform the duties and responsibilities of the job.
  - Identify KSAs/competencies to be included in the assessment strategy.
  - Identify factors that are important in evaluating eligibles.
  - Document the job analysis process for future use.

- Identify an Assessment Tool:
Use an assessment tool based on:

- KSAs/competencies identified in the job analysis.
- Grade level of the position to be filled.
- Validity of the assessment.
- Expected number of applicants.
- Resources such as raters and automated systems.
- Time to develop.
- Cost.

- Determine availability of an existing assessment tool or develop/procure a new tool such as:
  - Structured Interview.
  - Written Test.
  - Assessment Center.
  - Work Sample.
  - Crediting Plan/Rating Schedule.

- Choose a Ranking Method:
  - Determine method of ranking eligible candidates (hereafter “eligibles”), such as category rating or traditional ranking procedures (Rule of Three).

Helpful Hints:

- Use OPM’s interactive Assessment Decision Tool to customize the assessment strategy based on specific competencies and other factors relevant to the hiring situation (e.g., volume of applicants, level of available resources). See http://apps.opm.gov/ADTadt/ADTClientMain.aspx?JScript=1.

- Refer to OPM’s Assessment Decision Guide for additional information about the range of assessment tools (e.g., structured interview, work sample) at http://apps.opm.gov/adt/content.aspx?JScript=1.


- Develop a job analysis library covering mission-critical and frequently filled positions. OPM maintains a job analysis data base called “HR Manager” and it is updated periodically as occupational studies are completed. Access is limited to subscription holders.

- Develop assessment library covering mission-critical frequently filled positions.

Create and Post a Job Opportunity Announcement including Identifying Career Patterns

Ownership: Human Resources Office

Maximum number of calendar days: 2

- Identify required items for a job announcement:
  - Agency name
  - Announcement number
  - Title of the position
  - Series
  - Grade(s) or equivalent and entrance pay
  - Open and closing dates (including cut-off dates, if any)
  - Duty location
  - Number of vacancies
  - Description of duties
  - Qualification requirements (including KSAs/competencies)
  - Basis for rating
  - How to apply
  - Ensure appropriate/adequate record keeping of all actions/transactions
  - Agency’s definition of “well qualified” (Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP), Interagency Career Transition Assistance Program (ICTAP) and Reemployment Priority List (RPL).
  - Information on how to claim Veterans’ Preference
  - EEO Statement
  - Reasonable Accommodation Statement

- Identify optional items:
  - Recruitment/Relocation incentive opportunities
  - Alternative work schedules
  - Part-time employment and job sharing opportunities
  - Telework options
  - Employee benefits
  - Work/Life programs
  - Transit subsidy
  - Employee assistance programs
  - Incentive award opportunities
  - Development and training opportunities

- Identify security requirements:
  - Review the level of security required to perform the duties of the position.

- Identify Career Patterns for applicants based on workforce and recruitment planning process.
• Identify the length of time of process from applying to entering on duty.

• Post Job Opportunity Announcement:
  o Review agency public notice requirement/policy.
  o Post job opportunity announcement on OPM’s USAJOBS website.

Helpful Hints:


• For Career Patterns Initiative refer to http://www.opm.gov/hcaaf_resource_center/careerpatterns/.

• Develop an automated staffing system that performs functions that generates job opportunity announcements (JOAs); posts JOAs on USAJOBS; accepts applications via Internet, phone, or fax; tracks applicant status and notification, etc. For more information on USA Staffing: The Automated Solution for Public Sector Hiring refer to http://www.opm.gov/hr/employ/products/services/usastaffing/usastaffing.asp.

Receive Applications and Notify Applicants

Ownership: Human Resources Office

Maximum number of calendar days: 10

• Use an automated staffing system that provides reasonable accommodation in the application and hiring process for individuals with disabilities.

• Take into account individuals who do not have internet access.

• Accept applications with supporting documentation only during the open period of the job announcement.
• Document receipt of applications by date stamping applications on hard copy applications or with electronic date markers.

• Notify applicants of receipt of their application.

**Helpful Hint:** Develop an applicant tracking system to provide regular updates on the status of an application as significant decisions are reached. See the Government’s “Pledge to Applicants.”

**Close Job Opportunity Announcement**

Ownership: Human Resources Office

• Job Opportunity Announcement removed from USAJOBS based on the closing date.

**Evaluate Applications**

Ownership: Human Resources Office

Maximum number of calendar days: 15 calendar days

• Evaluate Applications:
  
  o Review applications for minimum qualification determination.
  
  o Review applications for selective placement factors, if any.
  
  o Review applications for quality ranking factors, if any.
  
  o Identify CTAP, ICTAP, or RPL eligibility:
  
  o Review applications for legal requirements (i.e., veterans’ preference, citizenship, age, etc.).
  
  o If the job requires an OF-306 at the time of application, it may be necessary to screen applications to determine if there are issues that warrant referring the case for a suitability determination. If there are, suitability should be adjudicated, based upon a background investigation appropriate to the risk designation for the position. Similarly, it may be necessary to screen applicants to determine if they are eligible for the position, based upon the sensitivity designation, including consideration of requirements for access to classified information.

• Rate and rank applications:
  
  o Rate applications based on the assessment tool created for the position.
  
  o Apply veterans’ preference, if appropriate.
• Place eligibles in the appropriate ranking order (i.e., traditional ranking or category rating).

• Notify applicants of results of the qualification evaluation.

**Issue Certificate and Notify Eligibles**

Ownership: Human Resources Office

Maximum number of calendar days: 1

• Issue Certificate of Eligibles to selecting official:
  o Rank eligible candidates based on the ranking procedure identified in the job announcement.
  o Create a list of eligible candidates for review by the selecting official.

• Notify eligible candidates who were not referred on the certificate:
  o Notify applicants of the status of their applications whether they were determined eligible or ineligible for the position.

**Review Applications, Schedule and Conduct Interviews, Check References, Make Selection and Return Certificate**

Ownership: Manager

Maximum number of calendar days: 15

• Review Applications of eligible candidates on the certificate:
  o Determine the best eligible candidates for the position based on a review of the applications/resumes and all appropriate documents by the selecting official.

• Schedule and conduct interviews:
  o Determine and follow agency policy on interviewing eligibles.
  o Schedule and conduct interviews either by the selecting official or panel.
  o Develop interview questions specific to the position.
  o Train individuals, including supervisor or manager, if a structured interview is being conducted as part of the assessment process.
  o Identify best candidate(s) for the position based on the interview process.
  o Check references, verify current and/or previous employment, conduct reference checks of current and/or previous supervisors and conduct personal reference checks of individuals identified by the candidate.

• Sign and return certificate:
  o Sign and return certificate identifying the selected individual for the position.
**Helpful Hint:** Develop standard operating procedures (SOP) on reviewing applications, conducting interviews, checking references, making a selection and returning the certificate. These SOPs must be in compliance with the appropriate laws and regulations such as veterans’ preference.

**Tentative Job Offer and Acceptance**

Ownership: Human Resources Office, Security Office

Maximum number of calendar days: 3

- Audit certificate for compliance with laws and regulations.
- Extend a tentative job offer to selectee.
- Solicit, review and verify information from selectee such as DD-214, college transcripts, OF-306, Declaration for Federal Employment, etc. if not already provided with the initial application.
- Notify remaining eligibles that a selection was made.

**Initiate Investigation at the Appropriate Level for the Position to be Filled**

Ownership: Human Resources Office, Security Office

Maximum number of calendar days: 10

- Refer to the Security and Suitability Roadmap.

**Official Offer and Acceptance**

Ownership: Human Resources Office

Maximum number of calendar days: 2

- Allow selectee to accept or decline job offer and make necessary arrangements with current employer.

**Enter on Duty**

Ownership: Human Resources Office

Maximum number of calendar days: 14
• Allow selectee to return necessary forms for entry on duty such as information necessary for background investigation and the like.

• Orientation Roadmap begins.

MEASURES

Percent of employees hired within 80 days as described in the Hiring Process Component of the E2E Model (source: Hiring Timeline Data).

Percent of applicants who indicated they were able to obtain information on current status of their application (source: New Hire Survey).

Percent of new employees reporting regular communications throughout the entire process (re: expectations for the hiring process) (source: New Hire Survey).

Percent of managers reporting that they were referred applicants with the talent needed to perform the job (source: CHCO Manager Survey).

Percent of new hires reporting satisfaction with the hiring process (source: New Hire Survey).
Appendix C: As-Is State Map

The following legend and diagrams (figures 19-21) explain the organization of and show how to assemble the map contained in the following pages (based on page numbers 4-15).

Hiring Flow Map for the VA

- Data
- Personnel
- Process

= Flowpath
= Either path
= Either/or/multiple paths

Figure 19: Model Legend

Figure 20: Model plan

Figure 21: Composite hiring process model
PREHIRING

<table>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background Questionnaire Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background Checks Complete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

POST HIRING

| Security Screening Complete |
Appendix D: Tracking Data Obtained from HR Offices in the VA

D-1: PSB Value Stream Swim Lane Diagram
D-2: Sample HR Tracking Spreadsheet and Analysis
D-3: Consent to Participate in Interview Form
D-1: PSB Value Stream Swim Lane Diagram

The following diagrams (figures 22 and 23) show how to assemble the pieces of the value stream swim lane diagram contained in the following pages (based on page numbers 1-6) and an outzoomed map of the completed Image.

Figure 22: Layout of pieces of the overall diagram

Figure 23: Overall Swim Lane Diagram (Hall, 2010)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<td>212345</td>
<td>NY</td>
<td>New York</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>90210</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>HM23456</td>
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<td>EM78901</td>
<td>890123</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**INFORMATION**

- **Data as of Date:** 01/01/2023

**SELECTION INFORMATION**

- **Notes:**
  - *Please review selection criteria before applying.*
  - *Applicants must meet all eligibility requirements.*
## HR Statistic Analysis

<table>
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<th>Time (Days)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation (Days)</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Between Cert Delivered to Service and Returned to HR</td>
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## DEU Statistic Analysis

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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Between Cert Delivered to Service and Returned to HR</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
D-3: Consent to Participate in Interview Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERVIEW

Analysis of Relationships within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Hiring Process

You have been asked to participate in a research study conducted by Ethan Fiedel from the Engineering Systems Division (ESD) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.). The purpose of the study identify the links between steps in the VA’s hiring process which slow the progress of the process. The results of this study will be included in Ethan Fiedel’s Master’s thesis. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your position within the hiring process. You should read the information below, and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

- This interview is voluntary. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop the interview at any time or for any reason.

- You will not be compensated for this interview.

- Unless you give us permission to use your name, title, and / or quote you in any publications that may result from this research, the information you tell us will be confidential.

This project will be completed no later than October, 2010. All interview recordings will be stored in a secure work space until 1 year after that date.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

(Please check all that apply)

[ ] I give permission for the following information to be included in publications resulting from this study:

[ ] my name  [ ] my title  [ ] direct quotes from this interview

Name of Subject

Signature of Subject ________________________________ Date ______________

Signature of Investigator ________________________________ Date ____________

Please contact Ethan Fiedel (E-mail: efiedel@mit.edu or Cell: (410) 258-4851) with any questions or concerns.

If you feel you have been treated unfairly, or you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Chairman of the Committee on the Use of Humans as Experimental Subjects, M.I.T., Room E25-143b, 77 Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge, MA 02139, phone 1-617-253-6787.
Appendix E: Hiring Process Documentation

E-1: Human Resources Recruiting/Job Posting Questionnaire
E-2: PD Template
E-3: Submitting a Position Description to the CCU for Classification
E-4: Staffing Package Routing Slip
E-5: Line Hiring Checklist
E-6: VetPro Enrollment Form
E-7: Sample E-Mail Enrollment
E-8: Modified Sample E-Mail Enrollment
E-9: Board Action Memo
E-10: VA Form 10-2453: Board Action for Social Worker
E-11: VA Form 10-2453: Psychologist
E-12: VA Boston Healthcare System Registered Nurse Board Action Check List
E-13: Transmittal for One-Time Special Boarding T-38 Hybrid Occupations
E-14: Screening Checklist
E-1: Human Resources Recruiting/Job Posting Questionnaire

YOUR FAILURE TO PROVIDE THE REQUIRED INFORMATION LISTED BELOW WILL RESULT IN A DELAY IN ANNOUNCING YOUR VACANCY. These documents must be hand delivered or mailed to HRM (05) as signatures are required on the SF 52 and page 2 of recruitment questionnaire.

Along with page 2 of this form, you must also include the following:

- Organizational Chart - vacancy highlighted
- Classified Position Description (PO) with SIGNED OF-8 or Functional Statement
- Signed SF-52
  MUST INCLUDE APPROPRIATION CODE in Block 36 & VICE in Block 43 (former employee's last name)

IF YOU NEED ASSISTANCE IN COMPLETING THIS FORM OR HAVE QUESTIONS, CONTACT YOUR HR STAFFING SPECIALIST

ALL QUESTIONS MUST BE ANSWERED

OFFICIAL COMPLETING THIS FORM MUST SIGN AND DATE ITEM #10
HUMAN RESOURCES RECRUITING/JOB POSTING QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Who would you like to reach? (select one or more)
   - Hospital Wide - Reaches ENRM/VISN (Bldg. 61) Employees
   - VISN Wide - Reaches Employees of the VISN 1 Medical Centers
   - Agency Wide - Reaches all VA Employees
   - Government Wide - Reaches all Government Agencies
   - DEU (external) - Will reach the public (only for Title 5 and BU positions)
   - Limited Area of Consideration - Approval from the Hospital Director is Required (copy to Union)
   - Status Eligible's - may include: Reinstatement Eligible’s, Disability Programs, VEOA, VRA, CTAP/ICTAP
     (questions about these programs can be directed to your HR Staffing Specialist).

2. What type of appointment is this position? Must indicate one:
   - Permanent
   - Term - 1 to 4 years
   - Temporary - not to exceed
   - Non-Bargaining
   - Bargaining

3. What is the title of position and position description number?

4. Is the location other than Bedford? NO YES - Where?

5. What occupation are you recruiting for?
   - Title-5
   - Title-38
   - Title-38 Hybrid

6. What grade level(s) are you recruiting for?

7. SELECTIVE FACTORS: Please indicate any selective factors (critical to the position) you would like to use:

8. Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSA’s) are extracted from the PD; however, if you have specific KSA’s relevant to the PD that you would like to use, please indicate them here.

9. Are you offering a Recruitment or Relocation Incentive/Bonus (up to 25%)? YES NO

10. Is this a VICE position? YES NO (If no) Has the position been approved VIA AEB? YES NO

11. Is the position?
    - Full-Time Days of the week: ____________________________ Hours: ____________________________
    - Part-Time Days of the week: ____________________________ Hours: ____________________________

12. Who may we contact for information? PLEASE PROVIDE TWO (2) NAMES:
    CONTACT #1 Name & phone: ____________________________
    CONTACT #2 Name & phone: ____________________________

SIGNATURE OF OFFICIAL COMPLETING FORM: ____________________________ DATE: ____________________________
NOTE: All Crafts and Trades position must meet OPM requirements defined in OPM Intro to Job Grading Stds, Sep 1968 as well as the applicable Individual Job Grading Standards used to classify the position.

Title:
NAF Plan/Series/Grade: (Proposed)
FLSA: (Assign IAW FLSA rules)
Installation:
Classified by:
Classified date:
Drug Test Required: (Yes/No)
Financial Disclosure Required: (Yes/No)
Requires Access to Firearms: (Yes/No)
Emergency Essential: (Yes/No)
Target Grade/FPL:

MAJOR DUTIES:
Briefly describe the duties to be performed. Include description of lead duties as well as non-lead crafts and trades duties.

Performs other duties as assigned.

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE:
The kind or nature of knowledge and/or skill used to perform the duties and how it is used.

RESPONSIBILITY:
Briefly describe the supervision received, how the work is assigned and carried out and how the work is evaluated.

PHYSICAL EFFORTS:
All the physical requirements of the position.

WORKING CONDITIONS:
All the conditions under which the work is performed.

QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS:
IAW AR 215-3, paragraph 2-1, (1), (2), (3) and Appendix B.

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT:
Satisfactory completion of pre-employment background checks in accordance with AR 215-3, 2-13....

EVALUATION:
FLSA evaluation is required on all positions, regardless of assigned pay band.
A formal evaluation statement is required for all mixed grade/mixed series crafts and trades work.
E-3: Submitting a Position Description to the CCU for Classification

Department of Veterans Affairs – VISN 1 Classification Unit

MEMORANDUM

To: HRMS/Classification (05CCU)  Date:
From:
Subj: Request for Classification/Position Audit

(check all items below that apply to your request)

☐ Request for position audit: The reason for this request is:
  □ Change in duties  □ Addition of new technology  Other:
  Has this position been audited/reviewed within the last year? Yes □ No □
  When?

☐ Attached for classification is a position description
  This position description consists of:
  □ Completed and signed OF-8, PD Cover Sheet
  □ Main body which consists of the following sections: introduction, major duties and responsibilities, and grading factors (See class standard for correct format or call HR or contact the CCU)
  □ Direct patient care positions: information in both the major duties and knowledge sections pertaining to the age related needs of patients.

  The reason for submission of this PD:
  □ New position - Number of FTEE for this PD _____ and No. of positions _____
     Has this position been approved at Resources Mgt. Committee? Yes □ No □

  □ Revision of an existing PD:

Position encumbered? No Yes □ If yes date incumbent entered position:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PD#</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>SERIES</th>
<th>GRADE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Is this position part of a reorganization that involves the establishment or revision of other position descriptions? Yes □ No □

Has this position been previously revised within the last year? Yes □ No □

When?

Questions concerning this request should be directed to: (Name and extension)

NAME, TITLE AND EXTENSION OF SERVICE CHIEF
Vacancy Announcement Number: ________________________________

Title 38: ________  Title 38 Hybrid: ________  Title 5: ________

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<td>HR Program Support – Out</td>
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<td>Chief/Asst Chief HR – In</td>
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<td>Staffing In Box – Out</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Posted</td>
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</table>

NOTES:
E-5: Line Hiring Checklist

SERVICE LINE HIRING CHECKLIST

This checklist provides Service Line Chiefs and Managers with a list of action items that can be performed NOW that can speed up the overall hiring process for your service. Don’t wait until you receive a hiring certificate to start these processes.

- Best Qualified Interview Panel Construction

  This is to advise you as the selecting official, that per Master Agreement between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the National Association of Government Employees - Article 22, Section J 0, Paragraph A; Panels for all bargaining unit positions will include two bargaining unit employees chosen with the concurrence of the Local (ext. 2508). Absent mutual agreement, Management reserves the right to appoint Panel members following discussions with the Local and informing the Local of the reasons for its decision.

- Best Qualified Interview Panel Questions

- (Subject Matter Expert) Initial Qualification Panel Construction (WG Positions Only)

- Sponsor identified to assist new employee

- Return certificate to HR within 15 calendars days of receipt the certificate

HR Performance Standard

Please pay close attention if you are hiring for one of the below positions

All Title 38 and Title 38H positions: Less than 30 days from tentative selection to firm offer
Below Title 5 positions: Less than 30 days from close of announcement to firm offer

GS 0181 Rehabilitation Technician
GS 0303 Program Support Assistant
GS 0303 Program Support Clerk Customer Service
GS 0621 Nursing Assistant
WG 3566 Housekeeping Aid
VETPRO ENROLLMENT FORM
(Please type or print legibly)

The following information is required to enroll an applicant into VetPro:

(1) APPLICANT'S NAME: ___________________________ (2) DEGREE: ___________________________

(3) GENDER: _____ (4) SSN: ___________________________ (5) DOB: ___________________________

(6) MAILING ADDRESS: Specify: __ Residence __ Business: (7) PHONE: ______

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

PLEASE NOTE: Applicant must hold at least one full, current, active and unrestricted license in his or her profession. License(s) is/are held in the state(s) of: ___________________________

If the above information was completed by someone other than the applicant please verify SSN by sighting one of the following sources:

☐ Social Security Card
☐ W-2
☐ Payroll Stub/PAID System
☐ Other legal document: Specify: ___________________________

__________________________________________________________ DATE
SIGNATURE OF PERSON COMPLETING ABOVE PORTION OF FORM (UNSIGNED FORMS WILL BE RETURNED)

THIS SECTION IS TO BE COMPLETED BY THE REQUESTING SERVICE:

CITIZENSHIP: __ USA __ NON-CITIZEN: VISA TYPE: ___ J1 ___ H1B ___ O1 ___ OTHER

TYPE OF APPOINTMENT REQUESTED (PLEASE CHECK ONE):

_____ FULL-TIME _____ PART-TIME

_____ INTERMITTENT _____ (WOC) WITHOUT COMPENSATION

_____ CONSULTANT & ATTENDING (C&A) _____ ON-STATION FEE BASIS

_____ ON-STATION CONTRACT _____ ON-STATION SHARING AGREEMENT

_____ ADMITTING PHYSICIAN (MOD) EXPLAIN: ___________________________

__________________________________________________________ DATE
SERVICE CHIEF SIGNATURE

__________________________________________________________ DATE
MEDICAL STAFF OFFICE:

_____ Application sent: date

_____ HR-MSO spread sheet, if applicable (physicians only)

_____ Privplus

5/23/06
Dear Miss XXXXXX,

I've enrolled you into VetPro, an online credentialing program that the VA has implemented for all Licensed or Credentialed employees. If you would please read the attachments and log on to input your information in VetPro, I would greatly appreciate your assistance.

- Release of Information/ROI
  - Please print your name, sign, date, and mail back to me.

Please return the Release of Information form to me as soon as possible by mail at the address below. If you need assistance with any of the steps, my phone number is: (774) 826-3109. Here is the link for the VetPro site.

https://fcp.vetpro.org/Login/tabid/261/Default.aspx?

To enter the VetPro system, please enter the following information when you access the login page of the above mentioned web site.

Log-On ID: (your social security number)
Password: Changeme1!
(capital letter C without spaces)
SUBJ: Credentialing Process

Dear:

Submission of your credentials into the VetPro Credentialing System is required of all VHA licensed, registered, and certified health care providers. This system is used nationwide at all VHA healthcare facilities. As part of the credentialing process, it is necessary for you to submit complete information concerning your professional education, training, experience, licensure and certifications. All information must be submitted to this office within 15 days of the date of this letter.

For your consideration, most forms are electronic and easily accessed through your Internet browser. Enclosed is a list of information you will need in order to successfully complete these electronic credentialing forms. You MUST log in to VetPro, the VA's Credentials Data Bank, to complete the electronic portion. The enclosed paper form needs to be returned to me. The Internet address for VetPro is:


To enter the VetPro system, please enter the following information when you access the login page of the above mentioned web site.

Log-On ID: (your social security number)
Password: Changeme1!
(capital letter C without spaces)

Once you have logged onto the system you will be required to change your password. This is necessary to maintain the security and integrity of the VetPro system. Only you will know this new password. Should you forget your new password, please contact me.

The signed Release of Information allows VA Boston Healthcare System to make inquiries and verify the information you have submitted.

Please feel free to contact me at 1-774-826-3109 if you have any questions. When both the electronic information and the Release of Information (ROI) form are received, the credentialing process will be initiated.

Sincerely,
Memorandum

E-9: Board Action Memo

Department of Veterans Affairs

Date: XXXXX XX, 200X

From: John Doe, Ph.D., Director, Residential Mental Health Services
THRU: Jane K. Doe, PhD, Chief, Psychology Service, VABHS

Subj: Recommendation for Action on Initial Boarding / Title 38 Hybrid Functional Statement for Jane Doe, Ph.D.

To: VA Boston Healthcare System Psychology Professional Standards Board

1. I have reviewed the Functional Statement for the Psychologist Grade 13-Step X submitted by Jane Doe, Ph.D. and concur that her performance meets or exceeds the standards for this position. Further, please accept this certification that her performance consistently is satisfactory or better.

2. Dr. Doe completed all requirements for her doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology in XXX. She completed a one-year post-doctoral fellowship XXXXXXXXX in ________ (time period, if relevant). She received her Massachusetts license and HSP certification in (date) and has been working as a staff psychologist in the VA Boston Healthcare System since (date).

3. Dr. Doe [SUMMARIZE KEY DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FROM GRADE DETERMINING ELEMENTS]. ]

4. Dr. Doe also is active in (SUMMARIZE KEY ACTIVITIES FROM ENRICHING ELEMENTS).

5. Accordingly, I recommend positive action on the application by Dr. Doe for the Initial Boarding in relation to the Title 38 Qualification Standard.

John Doe (not related), Ph.D.
Director, Ambiguous Mental Health Services

RECOMMEND APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL
JANE K. DOE, PH.D.
Chief, Psychology Service
**Department of Veterans Affairs**

**BOARD ACTION**

**INSTRUCTIONS** - Prepare one copy for Field Station and one copy for Central Office for all employees for whom Board Action is forwarded to Central Office for review or filing in Board Action Folder.

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<tr>
<th>1A. EMPLOYEE'S POSITION</th>
<th>1C. NAME OF STATION</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1B. EMPLOYEE'S GRADE AND STEP</th>
<th>1C. NAME OF STATION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GS-9/1</td>
<td>VA Boston Healthcare System</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**INITIATING BOARD**

2 NAME OF BOARD (Check one)

- ☐ PROF. STD. BOARD
- ☐ DISCIPLINARY
- ☐ PHYSICAL STANDARDS

3 STATION OF BOARD

4 DATE

5 FINDINGS

This Board Action is to apply the VHA Social Work Qualification standard in accordance with the provisions of VA Handbook 5005.

Licensure/certification: Massachusetts Social Work license at the LCSW level; current & unrestricted to practice social work

Citizenship: USA

Education:
- BA degree -- Boston University, 1999
- MSW degree -- Salem State College, 2008 - accredited program CSWE

Highest level of experience since last appointment: GS-185-9/1, MHICM Social Worker

Achievements that may qualify for Special Advancement for Achievement (list professional certification, degrees, recognition from professional or academic institutions, publications, or other professional accomplishments that meet SAA criteria along with the date received).
**BOARD ACTION**

6. AFTER CAREFUL CONSIDERATION OF ALL FACTORS, THE BOARD RECOMMENDS THAT THE EMPLOYEE BE (Check one and explain in detail in item 9):

- APPOINTED
- PROMOTED
- GIVEN SPECIAL ADVANCEMENT
- NOT APPOINTED
- DECLARED INELIGIBLE
- OTHER (Specify)
- NOT PROMOTED

7. RECOMMENDED GRADE AND STEP

8. PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

- APPROVED
- NOT APPROVED

9. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS AND ADDITIONAL REMARKS TO SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS IN ITEM 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10. SIGNATURE(S) OF INITIATING BOARD MEMBERS (All signatures must be dated)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. CHAIRMAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. MEMBER</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. Certification of initiating board technical advisor that board action is complete and has been reviewed for adherence to all legal and technical requirements before being forwarded to approving authority

| SIGNATURE | DATE |

**REVIEWING BOARD**

12. REVIEWING BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS AND REMARKS

13. SIGNATURE(S) OF REVIEWING BOARD MEMBERS (All signatures must be dated)

| A. CHAIRMAN | B. MEMBER |
| C. MEMBER | D. MEMBER | E. SECRETARY |

**ACTION BY APPROVING AUTHORITY**

| 14. ACTION |
| 15. DATE |
| 16. SIGNATURE AND TITLE OF APPROVING AUTHORITY |

VA FORM MAY 1999 10-2543
Jennifer J. Vasterling, Ph.D., Chief, Psychology Service, requests the appointment of XXXXXXXXXXXX, Ph.D., as a full-time/part-time (Psychologist) Grade XX, Step XX, effective XXXXXXXXXXXX, 2010, under authority 38 U.S.C. 7401(3)/38 USC 7405(a)(1). Dr. XXXXXXXXXXXX will be assigned to the XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX Section, xxxx Campus.

SSN (last 4):  [provide last 4 here]
CITIZENSHIP: U.S.
LICENSURE: [state in which licensed], # [license #] Expires [provide month/date/year]
CERTIFICATION: [month/date/year], [Certifying authority here], expires [month/date/year]
EDUCATION: [year], [Highest Degree], [chose one Clinical/Experimental], [Training body: University]

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING:
- [year] - [year] months/state whether full or part-time:
  APA-approved Psychology Internship, [name of program], (#)
- [year] - [year] Psychology Fellowship, [name of program], (# months) [state whether full or part-time]

MILITARY SERVICE: [None or describe]
TEACHING APPTS: [Describe as applicable]

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE: [List each post-training position, as applicable]
- [year] - [year]
  Job title/employer, [indicate if official employed hours/week, up to 40]
... [year] - PRESENT

PUBLICATIONS:
- [# peer-reviewed publications, including journal articles and chapters]
  [# of books - as editor or author]

REFERENCES: [List names of references, only; 3 is adequate]
6. AFTER CAREFUL CONSIDERATION OF ALL FACTORS, THE BOARD RECOMMENDS THAT THE
EMPLOYEE BE (Check one and explain in detail under item 9)
- APPOINTED
- PROMOTED
- GIVEN SPECIAL ADVANCEMENT
- DECLARED INELIGIBLE
- NOT APPOINTED
- DECLARED INELIGIBLE
- OTHER (Please specify)

7. RECOMMENDED GRADE AND STEP EMPLOYEE BE

- GIVEN SPECIAL ADVANCEMENT
- OTHER (Please specify)

8. PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

- APPROVED
- NOT APPROVED

9. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS AND ADDITIONAL REMARKS TO SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS
IN ITEM 6

The Professional Standards Board recommends/does not recommend approval of the appointment of _______ as a full-time/part-time (Position Here) Grade _______, Step _______, effective as of this day, _______ under authority 38 U.S.C. 7401(3)/38 USC 7405(a)(1). Dr. _______ will be assigned to the _______ Section.

10. SIGNATURE OF INITIATING BOARD MEMBERS (All signatures must be dated)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. CHAIRMAN</th>
<th>B. MEMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| C. MEMBER | D. MEMBER | E. SECRETARY |

11. Certification of initiating board technical adviser that board action is completed and has been reviewed for adherence to all legal and technical requirements before being forwarded to approving authority.

| SIGNATURE | DATE |

REVIEWING BOARD

12. REVIEWING BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS AND REMARKS

13. SIGNATURES OF REVIEWING BOARD MEMBERS (All signatures MUST be dated)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. CHAIRMAN</th>
<th>B. MEMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| C. MEMBER | D. MEMBER | E. SECRETARY |

ACTION BY APPROVING AUTHORITY

| ACTION | DATE |

14. ACTION

| APPROVED | DISAPPROVED |

15. SIGNATURE AND TITLE OF APPROVING AUTHORITY

E-12: VA Boston Healthcare System Registered Nurse Board Action Check List

VA BOSTON HEALTHCARE SYSTEM
REGISTERED NURSE BOARD ACTION CHECK LIST

From: Service:__________________________________________
Name of HRM contact:________________________________
Phone:______________________________________________
Name of nurse:________________________________________
Current Gr/Level_____________________________________
Full time ______ Part time (fte)_________________________

Nature of proposed action (Check one):
- Appointment
- Promotion from _______ to _________
- Promotion with waiver of education requirement
- Special Advancement for Performance/Achievement (circle one)

Information regarding administrative requirements (Check one):
- Current proficiency rating of "Satisfactory" or better
- Recommended pay is allowed by current nurse pay scale

Highest educational level completed (Check one):
- Diploma or Associate Degree
- Master's (Nursing or related field)
- Bachelor's (Nursing or related field)
- Doctoral level

Document Checklist:

Include COPIES of the following documents:

- Board Action (VA Form 10-2543) with front side completed accurately
- Memo from Service Chief w/ recommendation. (Outline any additional information)
- Interview Form/Memo/Email
- Copy of application form and copy of resume.
- Copies of transcripts for all secondary degrees (AD, BSN, etc.)
- Evidence of current licensure/verification, current national certifications

- Copies of most recent & previous two Employment References or appraisals or Proficiency Reports (VA Form 10-2623). Most recent report should be within last 6 months. Note: If most recent appraisal is > 6 months, Interim report is required for all actions.
- Present (®) and proposed (±) functional description i.e. if changing position or increasing responsibility include new functional statement
- If New Graduate include 3 Instructor Evaluations in lieu of employer references
- Original SF 52, Request for Personnel Action for the proposed action

- Item is required for ALL submissions
- ± Item may be required, depending on employee grade or type of action—see Notes

Instructions: Place completed checklist on top of case file and forward to:
Human Resources (05D)
Brockton Campus

Revised: September 2009
E-13: Transmittal for One-Time Special Boarding T-38 Hybrid Occupations

TRANSMITTAL FOR ONE-TIME SPECIAL BOARDING
T-38 HYBRID OCCUPATIONS – P.L. 108-170 (12/03)

Name of employee: ________________________________________________________________

Title 38 Hybrid Occupation Title, Series, Grade, Step ____________________________________

From: Facility: ______________________ Station No./Office/mail symbol: _________________

Name of HRM contact: ___________________________ Fax: ______________________ Date: ______

Phone: ____________________________

1. Action Requested (check all that apply):
   - [____] Application of Title 38 Qualification Standard – One-Time Special Boarding
   - [____] Consideration Promotion Review (Anniversary Date of Grade falls within 60 days of
     the one-time special boarding) From Current Title, Series, Grade to:
     Requested Title, Series, Grade ______________________________________________________
   - [____] Special Advancement for Achievement - Attach supporting data

2. Information regarding administrative requirements: Verification by Human Resources Officer
   or designee. HR Representative Initials in the space provided indicating verification was completed
   No copies are to be transmitted for items verified:
   - [____] Evidence of current licensure, certification and/or registration and verification of any
     national certifications
   - [____] Educational credential verification (including diploma mill check) for promotion or
     advancement actions based on educational attainment.
   - [____] Current proficiency rating of “Satisfactory” or better
   - [____] For requests for promotion to a grade above the full performance level, facility
     management approves the position. Records to support this authorization are or record at the
     facility, e.g. approved organizational chart, table of organization, former position description, etc

3. Submit the following documents to the Professional Standards Board with the check list:
   - Functional Statement of current position. For promotion consideration, functional
     statement for proposed assignment.
   - Supervisory recommendation for proposed action(s) with certification that performance is
     satisfactory or better.
   - Board Action (VA Form 10-2543) with front side completed (omit social security
     numbers)
   - Where needed, information that indicates special qualifications was considered in the
     initial pay setting or other monetary awards for submitted accomplishments/credentials.
   - Employee’s Qualification Update Sheet

4. Submission Instructions. Until the secure Web Based Share Point system is approved for use
   submit as follows:
   A. For National/Regional Professional Standards Board Members: submit via
     FEDEX/Priority Mail to VHA/OI HRM Staff (10A2A), Dept. of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Ave.,
     NW, Washington, DC 20420.

   B. For all employees to be boarded above the VISN or Facility boards: submit via
     FEDEX/Priority Mail to the National Professional Standards Board Chair or Designated Point of Contact.
     Addresses to be furnished separately at the time announced by the Chair of the National/Regional PSB
     Chair

Revised 8/28/06 VHA Management Support (10A2A)

Please ensure the information covered by the privacy act is transmitted securely as you would
any document in an OPF/MRF or other credentialing folder.
Appendix F: Position and Functional Classification Standards

F-1: OPM Classification Website
F-2: Excerpt from Position Classification Standard for Social Work Series (White Collar Series)
F-3: Position Classification Standard for Custodial Working (Trades, Craft, and Labor Positions)
Welcome to the Federal Classification and Job Grading Systems website. This website provides Federal classification and job grading information that is used to determine the pay plan, series, title, and grade for most work in the Federal Government.

Subscribe to the "What's New in Classification" electronic distribution list to be notified of new classification issuances.

Send questions to: fedclass@opm.gov

Within these pages you will find:
- General information about the classification of Federal positions,
- Occupational information,
- Grading criteria for the General Schedule and Federal Wage Classification Systems, and
- Frequently Asked Questions.

Some Federal jobs are not covered by these documents. Please check with your agency human resources office for further information.
# Position Classification Standard for Social Work Series, GS-0185

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- Social Worker, GS-0185-11: 14
- Social Worker, GS-0185-12: 16
SERIES DEFINITION

This series includes positions which require application of a professional knowledge of the principles and practices of social work in the performance of such assignments as providing direct services to individuals and families, including work with individuals in groups. Also included are positions concerned with teaching social work, doing research on social work problems, training of social work students, and providing consultation and advice to members of related professions and community organizations on social work questions.

This standard supersedes and replaces the standard for this series which was issued in September 1956 and revised in June 1957, and which was specifically applicable to social work positions in a clinical setting.

EXCLUSIONS

Excluded from this series are those positions concerned with providing authorized social assistance and services to beneficiaries of public welfare programs when such work is of a specialized nature that requires knowledge of program policy and operation rather than the application of professional social work knowledge and skill. (See the Social Services Series, GS-0187.)

Also excluded from this series are positions concerned with Federal participation in and support of social welfare programs administered by States, local communities, or voluntary organizations. (See the Social Science Aid and Technician Series, GS-0102.)

Positions which involve performance of correctional treatment in penal and correctional institutions but which do not require application of professional knowledge of the principles and practices of social work are excluded from this series. Such positions are properly allocable to the Social Science Series, GS-0101 (to be filled under the Correctional Treatment Specialist.

DISTINCTIONS FROM RELATED FIELDS

For discussion of distinctions between certain kinds of work done by psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and others, see the standard for the Psychology Series, GS-0180.
COVERAGE OF THE STANDARD

This standard is immediately applicable to classification of nonsupervisory social work positions in which the primary emphasis is on direct professional service to individuals and families. Positions principally concerned with other methods of service or with research or teaching social work should be classified by comparison with the grade-level criteria in this standard and by reference to related standards. Supervisory positions should be classified in accordance with the General Schedule Supervisory Guide.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This portion of the standard contains: (A) explanatory information on the major changes from the superseded standard, and (E) occupational information on the work of the series.

A. Changes from previous standard

This revision of the standard for social work (1) discontinues former specializations, and (2) redesignates the series to limit coverage to positions that require professional education in social work.

(1) Former specializations  This standard drops the six former social work specializations (Clinical, Child Welfare, Family Service, Correctional, Public Assistance, and General) to reflect recent changes in the occupation that have reduced the importance of distinctions related to fields of experience.

Until the 20 years ago, the profession of social work was a composite of different fields of practice that emphasized particular knowledges and skills required by the specialized programs of various social welfare agencies to work in different settings (hospitals, correctional institutions, courts, etc.) and serve different groups of people (children, patients, aged, delinquent juveniles, etc.). More recent trends in social work education have emphasized a common core of social work knowledge and methods applicable in any setting and with any client group.

At present, the Commission on Accreditation of the Council on Social Work Education recognizes both general educational objectives that apply to all professional practice and three concentrations within the curriculum related to particular methods of practice and problem-solving processes associated with services (a) to individuals and families, (b) to groups, and (c) to communities. Concentrations of instructions in administration or research are similarly recognized.

These recognized social work methods do not imply specialized subdivisions of practice. Social workers who are mainly engaged in working with individuals and
families also work with clients in groups. The family itself is a small group. Social workers who are thought of as group workers usually work simultaneously with individuals who make up the groups. The fact that the problems of individuals, groups, and communities are interwoven makes it necessary for social workers to employ appropriate methods in their practice as the occasion warrants.

(2) Professional social work as a separate series. — The Social Work Series is limited to those positions that require a master's degree from an accredited school of social work and excludes positions for which there were alternative requirements under former occupational standards. The distinction between positions that require professional social work knowledge and skill and positions in social welfare agencies that can be fully performed by persons with other qualifications has been defined in this standard primarily in terms of qualification requirements. Whether a given position actually requires the services of a professional social worker will often depend upon how the position is defined by management and whether there is a stated basis for requiring that the incumbent's actions be based on professional rather than empirical methods. This change recognizes the need of Federal welfare programs for administrative flexibility in working out staffing patterns for division of responsibility between professional social workers and other employees.

B. Occupational information — professional social work

In developing this standard it has been necessary to direct our attention to the kinds of social work positions that predominate in Federal employment. Most of these positions are thought of as engaged in professional casework in the specific sense that their first purpose is to provide direct social work services to individuals and families. The term "casework" is used in this particular sense to designate practice associated with service to individuals and families as distinguished from methods of problem solving and prevention associated with group practice, work with community organizations, administration, consultation, research, etc.

Social work is oriented to professional practice and is primarily concerned with individual cases rather than with social problems as abstractions. Its knowledge and skill are applied to helping individuals and families find satisfactory ways of coping with their social situations and relationships. This concern is at the root and core of the historical values and professional identity of social work.

Research in social work is focused on producing valid and generalized knowledge for social work practice. The area of this research centers on the social functioning of individuals and families. It may range from studies of specific aspects of the methods and techniques used in social work practice to studies of a variety of social processes involving the individual and his environment. This research is for the purpose of improving professional practice.

The social worker's problem is one of finding suitable means to help individuals and families whose immediate situation creates more stress than they can deal with effectively. The stress to
which an individual is exposed and his resources to cope with it are the elements that the social worker must consider in helping the client arrive at a practical solution of his problem. Minor deprivations can create serious problems for those who are particularly vulnerable, e.g., the socially handicapped and those who are young and helpless or debilitated by age or illness. Ordinary pressures of living may cause acute problems for markedly vulnerable personalities. Individuals with superior resources (e.g., intelligence, education, motivation, family support) can often deal with circumstances that are of themselves marginally critical (e.g., loss of income, illness) without outside help. Some situations (e.g., separation from a child) are likely to be critical for anyone, regardless of resources.

The social worker's professional practice is apt to be concerned with the welfare of people who are exposed to deprivation involving considerable risk of personality damage or emotional involvement which requires particular caution to prevent or minimize destructive consequences. It often involves finding practical accommodations to the demands of living for individuals with modified capacities. Clients who have been conditioned by long and serious deprivation may be incapable of using practical assistance or community resources to solve their problems unless they are supplemented by rehabilitative services and the interest, concern, and guidance of personalized counseling. Highly individualized services may be necessary for personalities that are too demoralized, alienated, psychologically isolated, etc., to benefit from conventional supportive measures (too discouraged to follow suggestions, if not unwilling to entertain them, etc.).

The normal pattern of professional social work includes interviewing people to establish the nature and extent of their problems, helping them work out plans for improving the situation, providing assistance and services, referring them to community resources and other organizations as indicated, and assisting them to understand and modify their own patterns of behavior when appropriate. Broadly speaking, there are three major phases of activity that make up the action sequence of the casework process, namely: (1) identifying the problem, (2) deciding appropriate action, and (3) providing indicated services. In practice, the whole information-decision-action sequence is integrated into continuous operating activity. In social work literature, these steps are often called study, diagnosis, and treatment.

In the initial factfinding step, the social worker explores with the person concerned both the pertinent facts in his case and the significance he gives to them. The interview is used to establish facts about the situation, its nature, cause, components, and impact, while at the same time learning enough about the person affected to understand correctly its present and potential consequences to him. Once the problem is seen clearly and accurately assessed, the second step is planning appropriate action. Based on the facts at his disposal, his knowledge of agency and community resources, and his appraisal of the probable responses of the people concerned, the caseworker makes the initial and continuing decisions that determine the content and direction of agency services. This decision step is concerned with establishing what the social worker considers it is necessary to try to accomplish with the client, and how he plans to go about it.
The casework process culminates in action to provide indicated services, authorize benefits, make referrals, give advice, guidance, emotional support and other assistance to program beneficiaries consistent with agency objectives. The service often involves leading the client or members of his family to air and explore repressed feelings, consider new and different ideas, and reexamine choices and their consequences so that they can identify and redirect actions that would be destructive to themselves and others.

A continuing element of casework is the purposefully therapeutic relationship through which the social worker sustains the client during their joint engagement with his problem.

The same professional concepts, principles, and techniques are used by social workers regardless of the program in which they work, but the circumstances and details of assignments and the immediate occasions of service differ among the various social welfare programs of different agencies. Some representative assignments of social workers in programs concerned with designated groups of people are as follows:

In programs for the protection of children, social workers are assigned to investigate reports of harmful conditions affecting their welfare, provide casework services on behalf of children and their parents in their own homes, evaluate suitability of foster home and adoption applicants, place children in institutions, foster homes, or adoptive homes and furnish continuing casework services to children who are wards of the agency and to their families.

In programs of service to juvenile court cases, they are assigned to conduct social studies on complaints filed on juveniles, evaluate social factors and recommend disposition of cases, supervise juveniles on probation, and furnish continuing casework services for probationers and members of their families.

In programs of service to patients in hospitals, field health stations, and clinics, they evaluate and make known to medical staff social factors relating to illness, hospitalization, diagnosis and recommended treatment of patients, carry responsibility for social work aspects of integrated treatment programs, and furnish continuing social work services to patients and their families while they are learning to live with illness or disability of a family member.

In programs of service to Indians living on reservations, they provide continuing casework services for Indian individuals, families, and children; consultation and assistance to tribal courts. They work with tribal councils and community groups to facilitate the development of programs on the reservation to meet identified problems.

In programs for the rehabilitation of inmates of correctional institutions, they develop personal histories of new inmates, evaluate social factors related to their adjustment in the institution and in their outside environment, and make reports in connection with pre-sentencing investigations. They make recommendations to classification committees for changes in the inmate's program and activities and provide continuing casework services to inmates in connection with personal and family problems and pre-release planning.
In programs of public assistance, they evaluate social factors and recommend disposition of cases of clients with complex social problems related to deprivation and furnish casework services to clients on a continuing basis when they are unable to make use of agency and community resources without personalized guidance and support.

GRADE-DISTINGUISHING ELEMENTS

The characteristics of assignment content and supervisory control recognized by this standard as typical of each grade level are used in the descriptions of classes of social work positions. In applying the provisions of the standard to specific cases, the intent of the standard as a whole should be interpreted in the light of the following discussion of the nature of professional decisions and services, and the different purposes of supervision.

Nonsupervisory casework increases in grade level with the difficulty of the professional decisions and services required by the assignment and the independence of supervisory control typical of the incumbent's performance. Two basic variables that affect the grade level of nonsupervisory positions in this series are: the character of the caseload, i.e., the difficulty of the problems present in the assignment and the degree of professional skill and judgment required by the social work decisions and services they involve; and the freedom of practice characteristic of performance, i.e., the extent to which the social worker's recognized competence is reflected in decreased supervisory control that allows independent performance of work.

It is not generally feasible to sort social work cases in advance for difficulty and assign more difficult cases to more experienced workers because complications may not be evident until after the case is undertaken. Nor is it ordinarily feasible to reassign cases after it becomes apparent that they are "difficult" because of the recognized advantages of a sustained relationship between the worker and the client. Transfer of the casework relationship from one worker to another may be planned for in the case management program at certain intervals that permit reassignment without loss of service to the client (e.g., following the intake process in cases that can be diagnosed early). However, the same social worker usually has continuing responsibility for service to any particular person he works with, and members of his family if they are involved. Social workers are normally assigned overall responsibility for groups of cases, the unit of work being an assigned case, with the total assignment ordinarily designated in terms of responsibility for active cases in some type of physical concentration of client residence or location that will facilitate access, reduce travel time, etc.

These characteristics of the assignment pattern tend to equalize assignment content, with the result that differences in levels at which social workers function are related primarily to essential differences in the way their work is guided and reviewed. The limitations in professional skill and judgment typical of relatively inexperienced social workers more often result in increased control and guidance by the supervisor than in appreciably restricted difficulty of casework activities assigned. As the supervisor recognizes the worker's increasing competence in casework practice, he decreases control of more difficult decisions and services. However, unless serious professional problems are characteristically present in an assignment, relaxed
supervision alone obviously does not connote delegation of responsibility for difficult decisions and services.

**Person-to-person relationships**

The professional relationships with clients and their families and other people concerned in their lives are an integral part of the social work process. The decision and action of the worker and the reaction of the client are closely interrelated because many of the problems of professional service involve accomplishing changes in insights, attitudes, and motivations of clients in order to help them modify behavior that is contributing to their problems in successful living. When the client will respond with confidence to worker acceptance, interest, and encouragement, many social work services are relatively easily performed. It becomes more difficult to maintain an effective service relationship when the people involved are unresponsive or hostile to the worker, and indifferent to or afraid of his activities on their behalf. For example, if the client can make a valid appraisal of his situation and has no marked adaptive behavioral patterns that interfere with discussing it frankly and realistically, his problem can be readily explored. On the other hand, pertinent facts may be difficult to establish if the reported problem is not the causal or primary one and the client is unwilling or unable to expose the real actuating elements in his basic problem. Some of the considerations which affect the difficulty of identifying the problem initially and in maintaining an effective working relationship are: hostile behavior of a client in interview, defensive maneuvers to protect information he considers private or to avoid interference with rewarding parts of his life, and misinformation, whether given deliberately to mislead the worker or honestly because of limited understanding of the situation. If the social worker should be misled as to the facts of the situation and the feelings of the client, errors in judgment and action would be inevitable.

Basic interviewing skills include communicating acceptance, interest, and encouragement, and selective use of questioning, explanation, and guidance in working with clients to help them explore their problems. The social worker's interest in information about the client is an objective professional concern with finding out what is wrong and deciding with the client what should be done to help him deal with his problem. To do this, it is necessary to create a comfortable atmosphere in interviews, and help the client overcome anxiety by acts of reassurance, maintaining a relaxed manner, and making use of voice tone, gesture, silence, questioning and suitable comment to encourage or discourage response and get quickly to the problem. Through observation of the client's behavior, the worker is expected to identify obvious fears, anxieties, defense mechanisms and similar factors of attitude that may have a bearing on his total situation and his reporting of it. In working with the client toward the best way of dealing with his problems, the social worker employs casework methods and techniques to maintain a therapeutic relationship that will help him reach that goal.

The new professional worker who has been doing supervised casework as part of his graduate training should have acquired considerable skill in the use of the more basic techniques of establishing a non-judgmental, accepting atmosphere and maintaining a therapeutic relationship by acts of reassurance and objectivity that help the client explore his problem and sort out its elements. At the GS-9 level he is expected to use these basic skills to demonstrate tolerance and
understanding toward hostile behavior and expression of charged feelings in order to work realistically with underlying problems, and to make selective use of various ways of helping the client gain enough awareness to handle himself and his problems more effectively. At this level, supervisory instruction will be directed to the development of greater facility and flexibility in the use of more advanced skills.

(Provision is made at the GS-7 level for positions of new professional workers who are receiving practice training in person-to-person relationships as well as other methods and techniques of practice essential to the assignment. For example, a social worker who concentrated his student practice in community organization during his graduate study and then wished to work in direct service to individuals and families would need enough supervised practice training to develop facility in his professional relationships with clients before he would be able to perform above the GS-7 level.)

Mastery of the whole range of treatment skills and sound judgment in their use is assumed at the GS-11 level, although this is an area in which social workers continue to grow and develop professionally through practice. Some of the more difficult therapeutic techniques require marked skill in their use and in perception of their effect to insure that they do help the client toward solving his problems and do not disturb his useful defenses. The most difficult professional relationships are those in which the behavioral adjustments of the people served seriously interfere with acceptance of available help. Great skill and understanding are necessary to achieve the desired results.

Decisions and commitments

Professional social work intervention is not ordinarily required when the problem is a straightforward one of obvious needs that can be readily dealt with in terms of clearly authorized agency services which the client wishes to use and from which there is little doubt that he will benefit (e.g., need for better housing or medical prosthesis).

Professional decisions and judgments in social work usually concern problems as to appropriate action that involve serious consequences to the individuals who are served. More difficult decisions are required when agency policy is ambiguous, latitude for judgment increases, relevant considerations multiply, client reaction becomes less predictable, or success in achieving beneficial results is less certain. Individual decisions with relatively unpredictable results must often be made tentatively on a somewhat experimental basis subject to prompt modification as indicated by subsequent developments.

Professional judgments usually concern difficult decisions that can have serious consequences to the person who is served, and the weight of responsibility tends to increase with the seriousness of the effect on the client's situation (e.g., recommending actions that involve separating family members or committing people to institutions).

The professional social worker's trained judgment is the basis of his decision as to what the client's needs are and how they can best be dealt with in order for him to achieve a workable method of coping with the problems of living that confront him. When the worker has identified
sources of stress that are contributing to the client's problem, his own knowledge of ways of facing and neutralizing some of the factors enables him to decide what kind of plan to undertake with the client and how to go about putting it into action. In complicated cases the decision is usually made tentatively and reviewed and revised continuously in the course of service based on client and family response.

The most difficult professional decisions are those concerned with complex problems that require highly individualized treatment in situations where failure to help the client will have serious consequences for him and success is highly dependent on the validity of the social worker's diagnostic judgment as well as his skillful handling of services.

**Supervisory control**

Supervisory involvement in the casework process combines educational responsibilities for furthering the professional growth of the worker with operational responsibilities for insuring the adequacy and effectiveness of actions taken by him. Because supervision has the dual purpose of insuring sound action in important matters and developing staff capabilities, supervisory direction tends to be educational in method even when its purpose is operational control of action in individual cases.

The social worker comes to his first professional assignment with a substantial body of knowledge and skill gained in graduate study that has included supervised field practice. The supervisor builds on this foundation of competence through regular conferences and discussions to explain assignments, review progress of cases, and consider the worker's recommendations.

During the orientation phase, the supervisor concentrates on clarifying the agency's place in the community and its philosophy of service, its commitments, organizational relationships and goals, and guiding the worker into application of the policies and use of the resources of the agency and community within program methods and means. The supervisor may also be concerned with strengthening the worker's objectivity and his identification with the agency mission, or increasing his understanding of the attitudes, behavior, and needs of the people normally encountered in the course of its operations.

When the worker is familiar with the agency, the supervisor concentrates on improving his facility in the use of more advanced techniques of practice and helping him develop more penetrating judgment in assessing situations and planning appropriate action.

The supervisor keeps informed of the progress of cases under his operational control and identifies and participates in all serious decisions made by workers at the GS-9 level. Initially, he gives strong supportive and directional guidance on all decisions. As he recognizes evidence that the worker is taking all relevant considerations into account and making consistently valid judgments, the supervisor's control of decisions is more apt to be exercised in the form of active concurrence.
The experienced professional social worker who has become versatile in his use of service skills and has learned to make and take responsibility for sound professional decisions is allowed freedom of action in dealing with individual cases that are difficult and demanding. The social worker at the GS-11 level is expected to keep his superiors informed of the progress of his work, and to recognize and call to their attention any developments of professional or program interest, such as unusual aspects of individual cases or evidence of shifting trends within his caseload. Only when the social worker asks for consultation about problematical decisions in serious cases does the supervisor normally participate in consideration of alternatives and confirm or influence the conclusions as to appropriate action of a senior social worker.

The grade-level criteria do not describe a GS-10 level. However, there may be room for positions to substantially exceed the GS-9 level as described without fully meeting the GS-11 level, as described. Positions which do not fully meet the GS-11 level should not be evaluated at that level simply because they are "better than" GS-9. There is nothing to preclude the use of GS-10 in such cases.

GRADE LEVEL CRITERIA
SOCIAL WORKER, GS-0185-07

GS-7 social worker positions usually represent initial assignments for new professional workers whose preparation has not included supervised training in the methods of practice to be regularly used in carrying out the assigned duties. Social work assignments at grade GS-7 are the exception rather than the rule because social workers usually choose positions that involve methods of practice in which they have concentrated their field practice during graduate study. In typical assignments at this level, emphasis is on providing practice in casework methods and a variety of casework services are performed under close supervisory guidance and control for training.

At this level the social worker conducts interviews with clients, relatives, and others to obtain pertinent information to be incorporated in the social case history as background for planning indicated services, develops initial tentative conclusions as to appropriate services, and carries out such services as may be authorized by the supervisor. During interviews, the social worker gives information to the client, answers factual questions, and gives explanations and interpretations of agency policies and procedures that concern the client.

The results of each interview are discussed with the supervisor to examine the significance of facts secured, including any questions of their reliability, to examine the validity of the worker's impression of the behavior and motivations of the people interviewed, and to identify any clues the worker may have overlooked or any personal bias that may have influenced him. The worker is expected to draw conclusions and to make recommendations for appropriate agency action with reference to cases he works with. Recommendations are discussed thoroughly with the supervisor before conclusions as to appropriate services to clients are confirmed. These discussions involve consideration of consequences of various courses of action, expectation of
their effect under the circumstances, variations in client response to such action, and finally the supervisor’s reasons for his decision to concur in or modify the recommendation from his own knowledge of the background of such cases and his experience with similar problems.

At this level the social worker may carry out definite services that can be approved in advance as appropriate, as in helping newly assigned residents understand and accept the routine of an institution.

Note: These assignments are similar to the closely supervised practice performed for training by graduate students while they are working in an agency during field placement.

**SOCIAL WORKER, GS-0185-09**

GS-9 positions are characterized by substantial professional responsibility for providing social work services which are actively supervised when they involve performance of difficult services in complicated cases, and are performed under relaxed supervision with considerable independence of action when they involve conventional services in cases of limited difficulty.

All professional work at grade GS-9 presents a definite need for effective use of a variety of social work skills and the exercise of informed professional judgment in the process of assisting clients to face their problems, think them through, evaluate the situation realistically, consider alternative courses of action in relation to their needs and circumstances, and arrive at plans for using their resources to deal with the situation. Many positions at this level combine difficult services performed under continuing supervisory guidance with routine professional work performed under relaxed supervisory control. Independence of action, alone, will not take a position out of grade GS-9 when the content of the assignment is limited to relatively conventional professional decisions and services.

Assignments at this level normally include a fairly representative cross section of the cases dealt with by the agency. Work typically involves services to clients with a variety of psycho-social and environmental problems. Assignments are usually made in terms of continuing responsibility for providing social work services as required in a designated subdivision of program operations, such as to patients or wards or inmates in a related group of housing units or quarters or to residents of a section of a city or a reservation or similar administrative segment of the agency's operating services. Work is subject to active supervisory control and review through regularly scheduled conferences, with particular attention to those aspects of more complex cases which are recognized as unusually demanding.

The GS-9 social worker makes an independent evaluation of the client's situation, including the client's reaction to it and ability to deal with it, and arrives at a reasoned conclusion as to the preferred course of agency action that is indicated in the case from a social work point of view. However, at grade GS-9, social workers work within some limitations as to the difficulty of services that would be undertaken and decisions implemented without prior consultation with the supervisor for his concurrence.
For example, when the client is in the care or custody of an institution where decisions as to changes in his status are made by a responsible staff committee to whom the social worker makes recommendations, the supervisor would usually review the social worker's assessment of the case and his recommendations for client treatment to insure that conclusions drawn were appropriate and fully substantiated before the social worker presented them to the committee for action. In assignments of experienced social workers, as described at grade GS-11, considerably more independence of action is expected in making recommendations of this serious nature.

GS-9 social workers are normally required to work with complex cases and to make difficult decisions based on exercise of professional judgment in such matters as deciding what in a client's way of dealing with his situation is the best that should be expected under the circumstances, when compensatory behavior and limited insights should be left undisturbed as necessary defenses in coping with day-to-day problems, and whether positive benefit can be realistically expected as a result of changes in attitude and perspective. The worker must know what to look for and be able to explore and clarify pertinent facts and attitudes when misleading information is given by clients with limited understanding of their circumstances and feelings. Except for professional judgment, precedents for appropriate action are ambiguous and their application assumes considerable knowledge of the nature of normal and abnormal behavior, the causes and consequences of deprivation, the undermining, stabilizing, and strengthening factors in social circumstances and interaction, and the cultural and psychological implications of family disunity, unemployment, illness, delinquency, functional illiteracy, etc.

Cases often involve services to clients who require support and guidance in dealing with their problems to avoid serious personal difficulties when effective reinforcement can help the person make more constructive choices and overcome obstacles through increased ability to recognize, accept, and come to grips with his own situation.

In establishing and maintaining suitable relationships with those they serve, incumbents are responsible for effective use of professional skill, objectivity, and insight. Clients may be seeing a social worker because they are required to, and be completely antagonistic, indifferent, or evasive. It is the responsibility of the GS-9 social worker to deal constructively with both positive and negative reactions, understand disparate values, and reach clients from different social backgrounds and ethnic groups, communicate confidence in their ability and worth, and help them deal with their problems.

Supervision is normally exercised through regularly scheduled conferences and review of records, reports, and correspondence. The supervisory conference is for the purpose of discussing difficult or problem cases, evaluating effectiveness of work, and providing guidance as the need is indicated. By questions, suggestions, and explanations, the supervisor enables the worker to make a more penetrating assessment of cases with implications he has not grasped and to see the appropriateness of a different conclusion than he first proposed. The supervisor maintains rather close operational control of decisions and services when the worker is dealing with serious problems demanding unusual skill and judgment, but allows freedom of action to the social worker at this level in the relatively routine activities of professional practice.
In addition to direct performance of social work service, GS-9 positions may include incidental responsibility for giving supervisory direction to members of the technical and clerical staff.

**SOCIAL WORKER, GS-0185-11**

GS-11 positions involve intensive social work services requiring the exercise of mature professional judgment and the flexible use of a wide range of social work skills. This level represents performance of services in serious and complicated cases with demonstrated effectiveness based on sufficient training and experience to require a minimum of supervisory control and guidance and permit independent exercise of authoritative judgment. GS-11 social workers carry full professional responsibility for cases presenting a wide range of psycho-social and environmental problems with no limitations as to the difficulty of services that would be performed.

Illustrative of such difficult cases are situations involving sociopathic personalities and family groups who react to their circumstances with impulsive behavior that may be self-destructive or depredatory. Such a person may be a delinquent, a source of family and child-rearing problems, or a center of disturbance and deterioration in school and neighborhood groups, etc., because of his chronically defective behavior. Such personalities are hard to reach and the problems around them are difficult to deal with and challenge social work methods and techniques of bringing individuals to want and use help in achieving self-satisfying and socially satisfactory lives.

At this level, the social worker makes independent professional decisions and recommendations for agency actions that can have serious impact on the life of the person served, as, for example, in separating members of families, approving adoptive parents and placement of children, placing delinquents in protective custody, recommending placement of a patient in a nursing home rather than return to his own family, etc. When recommendations of this serious and problematic nature originate with incumbents of lower grade positions, they are normally reviewed by the supervisor in advance of action, as described at grade GS-9.

The responsibility for reaching independent conclusions as to appropriate action can make exceptional demands on the worker's professional judgment when consequences to the client are serious and results are relatively unpredictable. Client situations are often complicated by conflicting needs that are difficult to resolve even by highly individualized planning. For example, when a social worker is called upon to decide whether a child is in need of protection and should be removed from the home, or whether keeping the family together and providing supportive services can achieve the child's best welfare and greater common benefit to the family, the social worker's responsibility for recommending appropriate actions tests his understanding of parental motivations involved. His conclusions will depend largely on his considered professional judgment as to whether or not, for example, neglectful and abusive behavior of the child's parents makes it unsafe for the child or whether parental response to him can be modified and redirected with the child in the home.

Techniques of service that are involved in the effectiveness of social work practice at this level frequently demand highly developed professional skills, as, for example, in motivating a
psychiatric patient with a marginal adjustment toward resuming more effective control of his own life through a therapeutic relationship with the worker, or through insights gained in group therapy led by his peers with the social worker's oversight and guidance.

In GS-11 assignments, difficult professional services to clients with serious problems are not an incidental part of the workload but are regularly performed on a continuing basis with infrequent recourse to supervisory guidance. The supervisor is kept informed of the progress of the work and is available for consultation on substantive problems. The GS-11 social worker is accountable for identifying problems that should be brought to the attention of his supervisor, and for taking the initiative in determining that the supervisor should be consulted and the purpose of the conference. Some consultation is primarily to help the worker maintain perspective under the day-to-day impact of seriously troubled clients and the limitations of his own and the agency's resources.

GS-11 social workers may have responsibility for independently giving interpretations of case histories to judges of courts and members of boards, for presenting case studies at conferences of staff teams for their use in reaching decisions as to indicated medical, correctional, or psychiatric treatment, and for making recommendations that can be relied on for soundness of judgment and maturity of insight on problem cases.

GS-11 social workers characteristically participate actively in program planning and in the development and maintenance of public understanding and sound working relationships with local agencies and community resources. They assume responsibility for coordination with teachers, clergymen, lawyers, physicians, and representatives of other disciplines who are concerned with the same client or group of clients. Also typical of assignments at this level is the presence of responsibility for the exercise of initiative in community relations work involved in influencing public attitude and action toward employment, home care, social acceptance and support of clients who are parolees, members of different ethnic groups, released psychiatric patients, etc.

As assigned, GS-11 social workers supervise the practice of social work students placed in the unit for training.

Some assignments at grade GS-11 are positions of social workers who spend a significant amount of time in direct performance of social work typical of grade GS-11 as described above, and concurrently supervise the work of one or two less experienced social workers. Such positions normally do not have significant program management responsibility.

Also included at GS-11 are assignments involving responsibility for providing continuing social work services at a field location alone or with one or two subordinate social workers or social work associates without a supervisor available for consultation. Such assignments typically involve travel in an assigned territory and require extensive coordination of service with a wide range of residents of various communities such as local lawyers, physicians, and public officials, and with local social agencies.
GS-12 social worker positions are of two general types, namely (1) supervisory positions that include full technical and administrative responsibility for the accomplishment of the work of a unit of three or more subordinate professional workers when the base level of work supervised fully meets the description of grade GS-11 in this standard; and (2) positions which are classified at this level in recognition of program responsibilities which are significant enough to justify grade GS-12 with or without the presence of professional subordinates.

Illustrative of positions of the second type are:

-- those of social workers in charge of the social work program at a separate installation or similar organizational component where they are responsible for development and maintenance of professional standards of service, initiating and effecting changes in methods that will promote efficient practice, and coordination of social work services with other programs of service to the same group of clients. Such positions typically are responsible for representing the social work program at conferences and in contacts with other agencies and the public. Work is subject to regulation and procedural direction from the program directors in the central office of the agency and to the local management control of the directors of the institutions such as hospitals and clinics and correctional institutions.

-- those of social workers responsible for serving various beneficiary groups scattered over a large geographical area when assignments include direct social work practice in cases with complex problems, organization of community services on behalf of beneficiaries, development and coordination of procedures for the use of these community services by related staffs and satellite facilities, and development and maintenance of working relationships and agreements with other organizations having responsibilities for the same groups of people.

Basic responsibility for a program of social work services does not justify classification at grade GS-12 unless there is substantial accountability for program effectiveness, modification of service patterns, and promoting acceptance of the social work function. As distinguished from positions at grade GS-11 which are responsible for providing continuing social work services at a field location, positions classified at grade GS-12 on the basis of program responsibilities characteristically combine program development and evaluation with service functions.
WORK COVERED

This standard is to be used for grading jobs made up of janitorial and custodial work, such as sweeping, scrubbing, and waxing floors; washing windows and walls; dusting and polishing furniture and fixtures; and emptying waste cans. Work is done by hand or with powered equipment. This standard should not be used to grade jobs requiring the operation of a street sweeper or similar equipment.

TITLES

Jobs covered by this standard are to be titled Custodial Worker unless prior approval is granted by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management for other titles. Such approval must be requested by the headquarters of the appropriate agency.

CUSTODIAL WORKER, GRADE 1

General: Grade 1 custodial workers do a variety of cleaning tasks which require light physical effort, and involve the use of hand or lightweight powered cleaning equipment. Specific instructions are provided on what to clean and the methods to use.

Grade 1 custodial workers do several or all of the following duties:

1. Clean offices, storerooms, corridors, stairways, dormitories, hospital rooms and wards, and other areas. Sweep, dry mop, scrub, wax and polish floors, using brooms, mops, lightweight vacuum cleaners, and lightweight floor scrubbers and buffers. Dust, wax, and polish furniture. Empty ashtrays and wastebaskets. Polish door knobs and other metal fixtures. Wash walls, windows, and blinds that can be reached without climbing ladders or scaffolds. In living quarters and hospital rooms and wards, make beds and change linens. Collect soiled linen and place it at a pickup point. Receive clean linen and deliver it where directed, using a hand-truck.


3. Keep a stock of cleaning materials and equipment needed to do the work. Tell supervisors when more materials are needed or when equipment is in need of repair or replacement.
Skill and Knowledge: Grade 1 custodial workers need basic abilities and knowledges, which generally require no job training or previous work experience (read signs, follow simple oral and written instructions, move around well enough to work safely, lift and move lightweight objects). They must be able to use common cleaning tools and lightweight vacuum cleaners. In addition, Grade 1 custodial workers may use powered waxers and buffers, which require a short training period.

Responsibility: Workers receive specific instructions for each new task, and are usually not required to use judgment, since their work is scheduled for them and is checked upon completion.

Physical Effort: The work at the Grade 1 level involves light physical effort, such as that involved in using vacuum cleaners and dry mops; running lightweight powered scrubbers and buffers; continually standing, bending, stooping, and reaching; frequently lifting and emptying wastebaskets; frequently pushing carts loaded with dirty laundry or waste paper; and occasionally lifting and carrying items weighing up to about 9 kilograms (20 pounds).

Working Conditions: Grade 1 custodial workers work indoors, in areas which normally have adequate heat, light and ventilation. They are exposed to dirt and disagreeable odors. Normally, there is a chance only of minor injuries (cuts, bruises).

CUSTODIAL WORKER, GRADE 2

General: Grade 2 Custodial Workers do work which involves higher levels of skills, knowledges, responsibility, physical effort, or working conditions than those described at the Grade 1 level of this standard. Normally, more than one factor must be involved, although it is possible for a major difference in a single factor to affect the overall level of the whole job.

Situations and Factor Descriptions:

The following three situations are typical of the Grade 2 level:

Situation No. 1:

Scrub, strip, wax, and polish floors using heavy (industrial-type) powered scrubbers and buffers. Wash walls, using powered wall washing machine. Vacuum clean rugs, using heavy (industrial-type) vacuum cleaners. Adjust, clean, and oil these machines, and change brushes, rollers, buffers, and other attachments on them. Wash and replace Venetian blinds, and wash ceiling fixtures and room partitions, using ladders and scaffolds. Move heavy furniture, supplies, and equipment.

Skill and Knowledge: This work requires, in addition to the skills and knowledges typical of Grade 1, the physical ability to handle and control heavy powered equipment, and to do minor maintenance on this equipment.
Responsibility: Grade 2 custodial workers must use heavy equipment safely. Supervision, instructions, etc., are the same as at Grade 1.

Physical Effort: Grade 2 custodial workers in this situation must move and control heavy equipment, carry and set up ladders and scaffolding, and work from ladders and scaffolds. Frequently, they must lift and move objects weighing about 18 kilograms (40 pounds), and occasionally objects weighing over 23 kilograms (50 pounds).

Working Conditions: Grade 2 custodial workers usually work indoors, in areas which normally have adequate heat, light, and ventilation. They are exposed to vibration from heavy equipment and to skin irritations from strong cleaning solutions used in stripping floors, etc. Care is required to avoid serious injuries when working on ladders and scaffolds and when using heavy powered equipment.

Situation No. 2:

Do the full range of cleaning duties in an assigned area (building, hospital ward, etc.), following general instructions on the work to be done. Use various preparations to clean and maintain linoleum, wood, marble, and various kinds of floor, wall, and ceiling surfaces.

Remove stains from a variety of surfaces, using chemicals and cleaning solutions. Occasionally work on ladders and scaffolds to change light bulbs, replace venetian blinds, wash walls, etc. Run powered cleaning equipment, cleans and oils it, and changes brushes and accessories.

Skill and Knowledge: Working alone, Grade 2 custodial workers must be able to do all cleaning duties on their own and without instruction. They must know the proper uses of a variety of special cleaning and sanitizing solutions, and must be able to remove different kinds of stains from a wide variety of surfaces. In addition, they must be able to clean and make adjustments to powered cleaning equipment.

Responsibility: Grade 2 custodial workers in this situation receive only general supervision, and get only general instructions on what is to be done.

Physical Effort: Moderately heavy physical effort is used occasionally in moving, setting up, and working from ladders and scaffolds. Use of heavy powered cleaning equipment (wall washers, industrial-type buffers) is required, but not on a continual basis. Overall, the physical effort in this situation exceeds the Grade 1, but is not as frequently exerted as in Situation No. 1 of this (Grade 2) level.

Working Conditions: The Grade 2 Custodial Workers usually work indoors, in areas which normally have adequate heat, light, and ventilation. Occasionally, the worker is exposed to skin irritations from strong cleaning solutions used in stripping floors, etc., and to serious injuries (e.g., broken bones) from falls from ladders and scaffolds.
Situation No. 3:
In shops, keep an area clean and in order. Sweep and wet mop floor, and remove oil, hydraulic fluid, grease, and other spilled liquids. Move heavy boxes, crates, parts, or other obstacles in order to clean up the area, and pick up scraps of wood, metal and other material. Remove scrap and trash cans from area to central pickup point. Wipe benches, machinery, etc., as directed.

Skill and Knowledge: Same as at Grade 1.

Responsibility: Same as at Grade 1.

Physical Effort: Grade 2 custodial workers in this situation occasionally lift and move objects weighing over 23 kilograms (50 pounds) (scrap and trash cans, crates, parts, etc.). They put forth moderately heavy physical effort in mopping or scraping sticky or heavy liquids from floors.

Working Conditions: Grade 2 custodial workers usually work indoors, in areas which normally have adequate heat, light, and ventilation. They are continually exposed to dust, dirt, and grease, and standing on concrete floors. Care is frequently required to avoid serious injuries (e.g., broken bones) from machinery, vehicles, etc.
Appendix G: Lessons Learned file comments

G-1: Distribution List Matrix
G-2: Minimum Personnel Required to be on Distribution List
G-3: Sample New Employee E-mail
G-4: Structure of Lessons Learned File
G-1: Distribution List Matrix

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<td><a href="mailto:20-2@va.gov">20-2@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:20-3@va.gov">20-3@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:20-4@va.gov">20-4@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:20-5@va.gov">20-5@va.gov</a></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy Technician/Aide</td>
<td><a href="mailto:21-1@va.gov">21-1@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:21-2@va.gov">21-2@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:21-3@va.gov">21-3@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:21-4@va.gov">21-4@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:21-5@va.gov">21-5@va.gov</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Therapy Asst/Aide</td>
<td><a href="mailto:22-1@va.gov">22-1@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:22-2@va.gov">22-2@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:22-3@va.gov">22-3@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:22-4@va.gov">22-4@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:22-5@va.gov">22-5@va.gov</a></td>
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</tr>
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<td>Prosthetic Representative</td>
<td><a href="mailto:23-1@va.gov">23-1@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:23-2@va.gov">23-2@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:23-3@va.gov">23-3@va.gov</a></td>
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<td><a href="mailto:23-5@va.gov">23-5@va.gov</a></td>
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<td>Psychologist</td>
<td><a href="mailto:24-1@va.gov">24-1@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:24-2@va.gov">24-2@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:24-3@va.gov">24-3@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:24-4@va.gov">24-4@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:24-5@va.gov">24-5@va.gov</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostic Radiologic Tech</td>
<td><a href="mailto:25-1@va.gov">25-1@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:25-2@va.gov">25-2@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:25-3@va.gov">25-3@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:25-4@va.gov">25-4@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:25-5@va.gov">25-5@va.gov</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Therapeutic Radiological Tech</td>
<td><a href="mailto:26-1@va.gov">26-1@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:26-2@va.gov">26-2@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:26-3@va.gov">26-3@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:26-4@va.gov">26-4@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:26-5@va.gov">26-5@va.gov</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td><a href="mailto:27-1@va.gov">27-1@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:27-2@va.gov">27-2@va.gov</a></td>
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<td><a href="mailto:27-5@va.gov">27-5@va.gov</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
G-2: Minimum Personnel Required to be on Distribution List

The e-mail distribution lists will be maintained by the IT department. Changes to the distribution lists will come only from HR; this will allow HR to have insight as to who retains which responsibilities as they move. Any personnel wishing to be added to or dropped from the distribution lists should contact HR. At a minimum, the following staff members will be included in the distribution lists:

Service Chief
Discipline Chief
Service AO
Discipline AO
Staff required to process PSB paperwork
Administrative staff responsible for Prospective Employee (PE) to include:
  Service and/or Discipline IT representative
  Service and/or Discipline cell phone representative
  Service pay representative
G-3: Sample New Employee E-mail

TEMPLATE:
From: VetPro Representative
To: Distribution List

To all concerned:

[Service Line] will be hiring a [Discipline Type]. [His/Her] name is [Enter name]. VETPRO check will be commencing shortly; PSB will be scheduled for no later than [Enter number of days] days after VETPRO check has been completed. [Name of service representative] will be responsible for ensuring boarding time line is met; primary reference for boarding [Discipline Type] can be found at the following sharepoint site: [Enter Location on sharepoint]. Any specific questions can be directed to [Name of discipline POC] in [Discipline] and [Name of HR specialist] in HR.

If you are on this distribution list and you should not be or know of someone who should be and isn’t, please contact [POC in HR] at [Phone number or website].

Very respectfully,
[Enter name and Contact Information]

EXAMPLE:
From: John.Doe@va.gov
To: 24-1@va.gov

To all concerned:

Primary care will be hiring a psychologist. Her name is Jane Doel. VETPRO check will be commencing shortly; PSB will be scheduled for no later than 30 days after VETPRO check has been completed. John Smith will be responsible for ensuring boarding time line is met; primary reference for boarding psychologists can be found at the following sharepoint site: sharepoint.com/va/psychology. Any specific questions can be directed to Kevin Doe in psychology and Bill Smith in HR.

If you are on this distribution list and you should not be or know of someone who should be and isn’t, please contact Bill Smith at (555) 555-5555.

Very respectfully,
John Doe
VetPro Representative

John.Doe@va.gov
(555) 555-5555
G-4: Structure of Lessons Learned File

At a minimum, each Discipline specific lessons learned file will contain the following information:

- List of references for Discipline’s Specific Board Action
- List of Points of Contact for Board Action outside local VA facility
- Example of Template for Board Action Form 10-2543 for that particular position
- Checklist for filling out Board Action
- List of commonly made errors on Board Action forms for this particular service.
Appendix H: Case Study Data

H-1: Miscellaneous Clerk, Existing Position, Maximum Time
H-2: Miscellaneous Clerk, Existing Position, Average Time
H-3: Miscellaneous Clerk, Existing Position, Minimum Time
H-4: Miscellaneous Clerk, New Position, Maximum Time
H-5: Miscellaneous Clerk, New Position, Average Time
H-6: Miscellaneous Clerk, New Position, Minimum Time
H-7: Industrial Engineer, Maximum Timeline
H-8: Industrial Engineer, Average Timeline
H-9: Industrial Engineer, Minimum Timeline
H-10: Physical Therapist, Maximum Timeline
H-11: Physical Therapist, Average Timeline
H-12: Physical Therapist, Minimum Timeline
H-1: Miscellaneous Clerk, Existing Position, Maximum Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Task Name</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Start</th>
<th>Finish</th>
<th>Predecessors</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Worker Announces They are Leaving</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Thu 1/19/10</td>
<td>Thu 1/19/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Identify Gap in Workforce</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Fri 1/20/10</td>
<td>Fri 1/20/10</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Modify an Existing PC</td>
<td>3 days</td>
<td>Fri 1/20/10</td>
<td>Tue 1/24/10</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Scan in Package/Complete Remaining Paper</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Wed 2/3/10</td>
<td>Wed 2/3/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>AD Submits to Group Member</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Wed 2/3/10</td>
<td>Wed 2/3/10</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Internal Chain of Command Review</td>
<td>29 days</td>
<td>Wed 2/2/10</td>
<td>Mon 4/9/10</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Send to CEO</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Mon 2/8/10</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Receive in Queue for Review</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Tue 1/12/10</td>
<td>Fri 1/15/10</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>GOU re: remove PC and associated CPN</td>
<td>4 days</td>
<td>Fri 1/22/10</td>
<td>Wed 1/27/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Assign for Classification</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Inform AD</td>
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<td>Wed 1/13/10</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Package Sent to HR Inbox Queue</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Thu 1/14/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Reviews/Package Checks for Accuracy</td>
<td>2 days</td>
<td>Fri 1/15/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Reviews Applicable ORN Guide and Charts</td>
<td>2 days</td>
<td>Mon 11/16/10</td>
<td>Tue 11/17/10</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Write up questions for Posting</td>
<td>4 days</td>
<td>Tue 1/18/10</td>
<td>Fri 1/21/10</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Develop Job Analysis/Assessment Plan</td>
<td>2 days</td>
<td>Fri 1/13/10</td>
<td>Mon 1/16/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Send to HR for Review</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Tue 1/12/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Discuss questions w/ AD</td>
<td>2 days</td>
<td>Tue 1/12/10</td>
<td>Wed 1/13/10</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>E-mailed to HR Director</td>
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<td>Received automatically by AD and placed</td>
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<td>Thu 1/14/10</td>
<td>Fri 1/15/10</td>
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<td>Fri 1/15/10</td>
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<td>Writes Job Announcement</td>
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<td>Thu 1/21/10</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Reviews/Review Job Placement</td>
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<td>Fri 1/22/10</td>
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<td>Signs off on Workflow</td>
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<td>Mon 1/25/10</td>
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<td>Job Open</td>
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<td>Tue 1/26/10</td>
<td>Tue 1/26/10</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Applicant Reviews/Respond</td>
<td>13 days</td>
<td>Tue 1/15/10</td>
<td>Mon 2/11/10</td>
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<td>Job Offers</td>
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<td>Mon 1/25/10</td>
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<td>Wait: Additional time for submission of documents</td>
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<td>Tue 1/12/10</td>
<td>Wed 1/13/10</td>
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<td>ORN Program Ranks Applicants</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Mon 1/18/10</td>
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<td>Reviews top ranked packages</td>
<td>3 days</td>
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<td>ORN Ranks generate Call Letter</td>
<td>1 day</td>
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<td>Sends Call Letter and Top Packages to HR</td>
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<td>Compile Packages</td>
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<td>Obtain Package from HR</td>
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<td>Tue 1/26/10</td>
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<td>Hold Time until Committee Forms are Ready</td>
<td>5 days</td>
<td>Tue 1/12/10</td>
<td>Tue 1/17/10</td>
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<td>ORN Package</td>
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<td>Tue 1/12/10</td>
<td>Tue 1/12/10</td>
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<td>38</td>
<td>Decide on Requirements for Package</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Tue 1/12/10</td>
<td>Tue 1/12/10</td>
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<td>39</td>
<td>Decide on Interview Questions</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Tue 1/12/10</td>
<td>Tue 1/12/10</td>
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<td>Preview Packages</td>
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<td>Determine who is to call for an interview</td>
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<td>Wed 1/13/10</td>
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<td>Schedule Interview</td>
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<td>Thu 1/16/10</td>
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<td>Conduct Interview</td>
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<td>Thu 1/15/10</td>
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<td>Determine who to offer job to</td>
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<td>Fri 1/15/10</td>
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<td>Route to HR</td>
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<td>Receive Package</td>
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<td>Verify Candidates Chose ORN Div Direct</td>
<td>1 day</td>
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<td>Send Email Requesting &quot;Un-Jobbed&quot; to HR</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Thu 1/21/10</td>
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<td>49</td>
<td>Receive Offers from Specialist</td>
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<td>Receive/Approve a Make Offer</td>
<td>26 days</td>
<td>Wed 1/20/10</td>
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<td>Send Reply to HR Specialist</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Thu 3/31/10</td>
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<td>Receive Email</td>
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<td>Thu 3/31/10</td>
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<td>Calls Finalized Candidate</td>
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<td>Fri 3/4/10</td>
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<td>54</td>
<td>Candidate Accepts Job Offer</td>
<td>2 days</td>
<td>Mon 3/7/10</td>
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<td>55</td>
<td>Services are Informed</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Tue 3/9/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Medical Questionnaire is Submitted/Carried to Ce</td>
<td>5 days</td>
<td>Mon 3/8/10</td>
<td>Mon 3/14/10</td>
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<td>57</td>
<td>PO Schedules Interview with Contact Person</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Thu 3/11/10</td>
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<td>58</td>
<td>PO Sets Interview</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Mon 3/14/10</td>
<td>Mon 3/14/10</td>
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<td>Candidate Has Completed Forms and Reports to HR</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>Mon 3/14/10</td>
<td>Mon 3/24/10</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td>Offer TS to HR</td>
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<td>Mon 3/21/10</td>
<td>Mon 3/21/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Receive Letter and TS Test Results</td>
<td>1 day</td>
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<td>62</td>
<td>Conduct Interview on Nurse</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Wed 3/23/10</td>
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<td>63</td>
<td>PO Schedules Interview</td>
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<td>Wed 3/23/10</td>
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<td>64</td>
<td>Nurse Signs off on Physical</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Wed 3/23/10</td>
<td>Wed 3/23/10</td>
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<td>HR Runs Background Check</td>
<td>1 day</td>
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<td>Wed 3/23/10</td>
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<td>66</td>
<td>HR Receives Feedback from Nurse</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Thu 3/24/10</td>
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<td>HR Repeats Final Offer</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Fri 3/25/10</td>
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</table>

**H-2: Miscellaneous Clerk, Existing Position, Average Timeline**
H-4: Miscellaneous Clerk, New Position, Maximum Timeline
H-5: Miscellaneous Clerk, New Position, Average Timeline
### H-6: Miscellaneous Clerk, New Position, Minimum Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Name</th>
<th>Decision</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<td>Request for Name Change</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>10/24/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Updated Per Name Change Request</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>10/24/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed Family History</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>10/24/13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prenatal Services</td>
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### Diagram Description

The diagram illustrates the timeline for various medical services and support pathways for a new position, highlighting key decision points and service delivery stages. Each event is represented with a date and associated service, providing a visual roadmap for the Minimum Timeline for the Miscellaneous Clerk.
H-7: Industrial Engineer, Maximum Timeline
H-8: Industrial Engineer, Average Timeline

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**H-9: Industrial Engineer, Minimum Timeline**

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*Note: Dates are hypothetical and for illustrative purposes only.*
H-10: Physical Therapist, Maximum Timeline
H-12: Physical Therapist, Minimum Timeline