



PERSONNEL AND  
READINESS

## UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

SEP 30 2021

### MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: Use of Direct Hiring Processes for Artificial Intelligence Professionals and Other Data Science and Software Development Personnel

- References: (a) Section 1751 of the William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (Public Law 116-283)
- (b) Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Memorandum, "Increasing the Use of Direct, Expedited, and Military Spouse Hiring Authorities for the Civilian Workforce of the Department of Defense," December, 12, 2019

Central to the National Defense Strategy's effort of building a more lethal force is the recruitment of a high-quality civilian workforce essential to the DoD's warfighting success. Consistent with reference (a), this memorandum provides guidance to all DoD Components on necessary steps to maximize use of hiring flexibilities to attract and recruit critical civilian talent with expertise in artificial intelligence (AI), data science, and software development.

In accordance with reference (b), DoD Components are to use direct hire authorities (DHAs) to the greatest extent possible for eligible external hiring actions. DHAs, including those applicable to competitive service and excepted service positions, enable DoD to appoint candidates more efficiently than traditional hiring procedures. There are several DHAs that may be used to hire top talent in the technical fields of AI, data science, and software development, particularly those authorized pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 9905 and 10 U.S.C. § 1599f. DoD Components should leverage the use of such authorities to attract and recruit highly qualified candidates.

Hiring processes should prioritize the use of panels of technical subject matter experts (SMEs) to assess applicant qualifications and determine which applicants are best qualified for the position. In March 2019, the United States Digital Services and the Office of Personnel Management piloted a successful candidate assessment process where technical SMEs were involved *prior* to the ranking of candidates and placement on the selection certificate. More information can be found at: <https://www.usds.gov/projects/smeqa>.

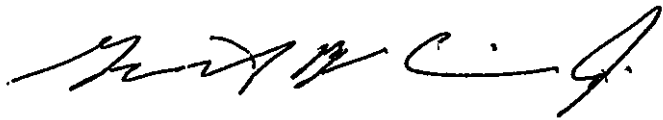
Use of electronic portfolios ("ePortfolios") to provide insight into the caliber of prior work, technical skills, and knowledge of a candidate is encouraged. An ePortfolio is a collection of work in an electronic format that showcases examples of a candidate's work. This tangible demonstration of capabilities contributes to the assessment by the panel of SMEs.

Finally, Components are encouraged to use referral bonuses for recruitment and hiring of highly qualified AI professionals and other data science and software development personnel. Such awards provide incentives or recognition to employees who recruit new talent for hard to fill, mission-critical positions. DoD Component heads may establish such programs pursuant to DoD Instruction 1400.25, Volume 451, "DoD Civilian Personnel Management System: Awards," November 4, 2013.

To evaluate the effectiveness of these direct hiring processes, DoD Components must report the following data to the Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service by May 31, 2022. For each AI, data science, and software development position for which a hiring action is initiated after the date of this memorandum:

- (1) Series and grade/pay band level;
- (2) Hiring time;
- (3) Use of DHA;
- (4) Use of SMEs;
- (5) Quality of new hires, as assessed by hiring managers and organizational leaders; and
- (6) Information concerning any other means used to achieve hiring objectives (e.g., use of referral bonuses).

For more information, my point of contact is Ms. Aquila Stewart, Associate Director, Employment and Compensation, Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service, at (571) 372-1547 or [aquila.m.stewart.civ@mail.mil](mailto:aquila.m.stewart.civ@mail.mil).



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