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USA Staffing
Structured Resume Review Frequently
Asked Questions
September 2023

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Introduction

The frequently asked questions below are intended to assist agencies and Human Resources (HR) users in gaining a better understanding of the Structured Resume Review functionality in the USA Staffing system (USAS). If you have additional questions that are not addressed in this document, please review our other resources on the [USA Staffing Resource Center](#), or contact your USA Staffing Account Manager.

NOTE: This Frequently Asked Questions replaces the former Structured Resume Review Customer Sprint Review Questions and Answers (Q&A) (April 2023) document. The Q&A from the Customer Sprint Review are still contained in this document, however it now includes new/additional Q&A received since the feature has been released to production.

Structured Resume Review Resources

1. Are there resources available for this new feature?

All of the Structured Resume Review resources can be found on the [USA Staffing Resource Center](#).

2. Is OPM still offering online training for Structured Resume Review?

Yes, OPM offers a self-paced online training course (approximately 3 to 4 hours) at no charge. The training, not specific to any one talent acquisition system, is designed to provide experienced HR professionals with the knowledge required to successfully manage a Structured Resume Review process. Please see the USA Staffing Resource Center linked above for registration instructions.

3. Will OPM be developing and/or providing anything regarding Subject Matter Expert (SME) training?

The OPM online training provides resources that experienced HR professionals can use to train SMEs. The SME Review Assignment User Guide is available to assist the SME from a functionality perspective when conducting the review.

4. If SMEs aren't sure if a certain experience meets the threshold, where do they go for help making that determination?

The OPM online Structured Resume Review training, as well as the SME Evaluation Assessment Methods Guide, outline ways to help ensure that specialized experience requirements being evaluated in a Structured Resume Review process meet best practice criteria. In addition, the online training outlines how HR/assessment professionals should conduct a training and calibration session with SMEs prior to reviewing resumes to help ensure that all SMEs are interpreting the specialized experience requirements in the same way. OPM recommends that all SMEs participating in a Structured Resume Review process complete the training/calibration prior to rating.

Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)

5. Who can serve as a SME?

As outlined in the [SME Evaluation Assessment Methods guide](#), SMEs are generally high-performing incumbents and/or supervisors who are highly knowledgeable about the work performed in the occupation at the target grade level. SMEs need to be at or above the grade level they are representing. It is critical that SMEs have first-hand knowledge of the technical/specialized experience required (i.e., at least one year (52 weeks, full-time) equivalent to the next lower grade level in the Federal service or comparable level of experience from outside the Federal service) to be successful in the occupation.

6. What does the SME do during the Structured Resume Review?

Structured Resume Reviews are designed only for SMEs to determine whether applicants possess the required specialized experience to successfully perform the job.

7. What uses of the Structured Resume Review feature are NOT appropriate for a SME?

- Determining if an applicant meets the Individual Occupational Requirements (IORs)/Basic Requirements for a position.
- Reviewing transcripts to determine if an applicant meets education requirements that can serve as a substitution for specialized experience.
- Determining if an applicant meets a selective placement factor that involves a certification, license, or other requirement that involves a review of supporting documentation other than a resume.

These types of reviews/determinations should only be conducted by an HR professional.

8. How many SMEs are technically needed?

To meet the requirements of EO 13932, 2 SMEs must agree an applicant possesses or does not possess each specialized experience statement. As a result, 3 SMEs are necessary so ties can be broken in the event the first 2 SMEs disagree on whether the applicant possesses any one of the specialized experience requirements (statements). A 4th SME (or more) is needed in the event an SME needs to recuse themselves from the rating process. SMEs serving as raters are required to attend a training and calibration session.

However, the system is flexible and does provide a non-EO 13932 compliant option, which allows a single SME to perform a Resume Review using the SME Evaluation assessment.

9. Can we identify all SMEs from the start?

Yes. It is highly recommended that you identify all SMEs that will be involved in the process before the Review is sent so that the HR/assessment professional(s) can train and calibrate the SMEs that will be evaluating applicants as a group.

10. If you have a smaller agency and may only have one SME, what do we do?

If you only have one SME available, you can still use the feature, but you would not be able to utilize the EO Compliant version. You could also consider recruiting SMEs from another agency (and possibly share the certificate as appropriate).

11. For the Structured Resume Review process, is it correct that SMEs must receive OPM- specific training before acting in this role?

No. The OPM online Structured Resume Review training is designed to train experienced HR Professionals to lead and manage a Structured Resume Review process. HR Professionals (or agency assessment experts such as Personnel or I/O psychologists) completing the training would be the ones to train and calibrate the SMEs. This information, including resources, is covered in the online OPM Structured Resume Review course.

12. Don't HR Specialists, already carry out a minimum qualifications review? Why does the SME need to?

The Structured Resume Review is recommended for highly specialized or technical jobs for which SMEs are in a better position than HR professionals to interpret experience as described in applicants' resumes and to determine if applicants meet the specialized experience requirements.

13. How are SME profiles built in USA Staffing?

SME profiles are Hiring Manager profiles. You may grant as much or as little access to other system areas as you see fit. A typical setup would be to create a custom permission profile for the Hiring Manager user type, that has permissions to Requests, PDs, and Notes turned off. Hiring manager permissions for Reviews (Assignments) are handled at the Review level, not in permission profiles.

Executive Order (EO) 13932 Compliance

14. Can a Structured Resume Review be used to meet the requirements of EO 13932?

Yes, if used in accordance with OPM guidance, the Structured Resume Review serves as an assessment for purposes of meeting the requirements of EO 13932. It is a pass/fail assessment.

15. To meet the EO, do you recommend using a minimum qualifications Assessment Questionnaire (AQ) or should you still use a scored (e.g., technical) AQ?

It would still be appropriate to use a scored AQ when using a Structured Resume Review. If there is a need to pare down the applicant pool prior to the Structured Resume Review based on a business necessity rationale (e.g., number of applicants that can be accommodated based on agency resources such as SME availability), you can include the Structured Resume Review in a subsequent hurdle (e.g., Hurdle 2). Using a scored AQ, followed by a Structured Resume Review (EO Compliant) used in accordance with OPM guidance would meet the requirements of EO 13932. In that the Structured Resume Review is a pass/fail assessment, agencies likely will want to pare it with a scored assessment for purposes of certification.

16. How exactly does a Structured Resume Review meet EO requirements if SMEs are simply reviewing the resume for specialized experience?

A structured and systematic resume review process that includes a panel of trained raters, clear evaluation criteria, and a standardized process can help agencies screen applicants in a reliable, valid, and effective manner. When implemented consistent with OPM guidance, this assessment method

meets the EO 13932 requirement that applicants must complete one or more assessments that do not rely solely on their self-evaluation.

17. To be EO compliant do two SMEs need to review each applicant and provide notes?

Yes, two SMEs must review the applicant's resume and fully agree that the applicant's resume reflects each specialized experience requirement (statement). If there is disagreement on any one specialized experience statement, a tiebreaker evaluation would be required to handle the disagreement. A tiebreaker evaluation is assigned to a third SME, who can be identified as a Tiebreaker Only SME or not.

18. What if there are only two or three SMEs available (EO compliant) but then there are recusals? Would that no longer be EO compliant?

It is highly recommended that you identify and train/calibrate more than the minimum required number of SMEs up front to handle recusal scenarios, reduce the overall burden on all SMEs involved, and maximize the efficiency of the training/calibration process. The system does allow you to add additional SMEs to the Review once in progress to account for SMEs who can no longer take part because of recusals, extended leave, or separation. However, it is important to train and calibrate any SMEs added to the Review after it is sent.

If you are not able to find more than 3 SMEs and recusals occur, the assessment cannot be completed for the applicants where recusals occurred. As a result, you would not be able to use the assessment method for the Vacancy since there could be lost consideration.

19. For meeting the EO, if the Structured Resume Review process is appropriate for higher graded positions, what is recommended as an alternative assessment process for lower graded positions?

Assessments that measure general competencies (e.g., USA Hire, structured interview) are likely to be more appropriate for lower graded positions.

20. For lower graded and hard-to-fill positions for which only a few applicants are expected (and USA Hire may be considered overly burdensome), can an agency collect KSA style narratives that are rated by trained SMEs to determine if applicants meet minimum qualifications?

Yes, that is an option from a system perspective, but not using the SME Evaluation assessment and Structured Resume Review feature to meet EO 13932. You can use the USA Staffing Manual Assessment and, if applicable, Multiple Hurdle functionality to document this assessment in the system. Keep in mind that, under hiring reform, KSA-style narratives may not be collected during the initial application. See other assessment options at <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/assessment-and-selection/other-assessment-methods/>

Vacancy and Assessment Considerations

21. Can I use the SME Evaluation assessment type with multiple grades?

No. The SME Evaluation assessment type cannot be used in vacancies that have multiple grades, multiple series, or multiple specialties.

22. Can a Structured Resume Review be used for an open continuous announcement (OCA) where applicants can continually update their applications? If yes, how does the system identify previously reviewed applicants?

Yes, you can use a Structured Resume Review for OCAs. When a vacancy is marked as a standing register, the internal contact for the vacancy will receive a system alert that an applicant has updated their application for that announcement. Any overrides and toggles will be removed, and the applicant will appear as if they are in need of a new HR review.

23. Can a Structured Resume Review be used for SES positions?

In its current form, the Structured Resume Review is not recommended for SES positions. As we evaluate SME Evaluation functionality enhancements, we will consider how it may be used for SES positions in coordination with OPM's policy office.

24. Is an I/O psychologist is required to carry out a Structured Resume Review?

No, OPM offers a self-paced online training designed to provide experienced HR professionals with the knowledge required to successfully manage a Structured Resume Review process. To meet compliance with EO 13932, the Structured Resume Review must be executed in accordance with OPM guidance as described in the online training.

25. How does the Structured Resume Review handle cases where the applicant can qualify based on education?

Structured Resume Review is generally recommended only for positions for which there is no education substitution (i.e., highly specialized or technical jobs for which SMEs are in a better position than HR professionals to interpret experience; the applicant can qualify based on specialized experience only). If the Structured Resume Review process is used for a position for which applicants can qualify based on education or experience, HR must review for education and SMEs will review for specialized experience.

26. What differences occur when you add the Structured Resume Review to hurdle 1 versus hurdle 2?

The basic functionality remains the same whether the SME Evaluation is in Hurdle 1 or Hurdle 2. Whether a user adds it in Hurdle 1 or 2 is dependent on whether they want to take all applicants through the Structured Resume Review assessment (in which case they would add it in Hurdle 1), or if they need to limit the number of applicants for this assessment based on a business necessity rationale (e.g., number of applicants that can be accommodated based on agency resources such as SME availability), in which case they would want to use it in Hurdle 2 with a Hurdle Score Cutpoint. Either way, having both an Assessment Questionnaire and a Structured Resume Review (EO Compliant) assessment in the Assessment Plan will count as meeting the EO 13932 requirement that applicants must complete one or more assessments that do not rely solely on their self-evaluation. If

using USA Hire, the Structured Resume Review needs to be added as Hurdle 2, as USA Hire and SME Evaluation assessments cannot be in the same hurdle.

27. Would it be appropriate to add a cutpoint to Hurdle 1 so not ALL applicants are sent to SMEs?

Yes, adding a cutpoint to Hurdle 1, with the Structured Resume Review in Hurdle 2, would be a reasonable way to manage the number of applicants going to the Structured Resume Review.

28. If an Assessment Questionnaire (AQ) has a passing score and the Structured Resume Review is included in Hurdle 1, would only those meeting the AQ passing score go to the Structured Resume Review?

Yes, only applicants who meet the passing score on the AQ would be in PA status and eligible to move to the Structured Resume Review.

29. How would you set up the assessment for a position requiring applicants to possess at least two of the four listed specialized experience requirements?

The Customer Sprint Review demonstration recording dated April 6, 2023, shows setting up an assessment with separate SME Evaluation Items (screen-outs) for each specialized experience requirement (statement), which means that the applicant must possess all of them to be qualified. The existing functionality also supports a set up where two or more specialized experience requirements are linked together under the same SME Evaluation Item (screen-out criteria), which would allow you to indicate that the applicant is qualified if their resume reflects at least one of the linked specialized experience requirements. However, it does not support setup of “at least two of the four” or other similar values, currently.

As a result, to accomplish what you desire, you must combine the specialized experience requirements (statements) into one SME Evaluation Item which requires SMEs to determine if the applicant “possessed 2 or more of the following specialized experience requirements.”

30. Can this assessment type be added after a vacancy closes or only before the JOA is announced?

This assessment type must be included in your Assessment Package prior to the announcement being released to USAJOBS.

31. Is the Structured Resume Review performed before HR issues a Certificate of Eligibles or is it performed on those who HR placed on a certificate?

The SME Evaluation/Structured Resume Review assessment is part of a multiple hurdle strategy within the Assessment Package of a Vacancy; therefore, it is performed prior to HR issuing certificates.

32. Would veterans who float be put through this process if they meet minimum qualifications?

Assuming a veteran has not self-eliminated from consideration (through minimum qualifications, selective placement factors, and/or eligibility questions, etc.), if your vacancy announcement requires the application of veterans’ preference, you will need to apply veterans’ preference throughout the multiple hurdles process. The veterans’ preference settings can be found in the Hurdle Settings

section on the Settings page of the Assessment Package or the Assessment Package Template. For more information, reference the [Multiple Hurdle Guide](#) on the Resource Center.

33. Are the applicants' resumes redacted?

Resumes are not redacted. Due to the variety of document formats and structures, as well as the variety of potential information that would need to be redacted, it is not possible to automate redaction with any reliability or high level of confidence.

HR may download the resumes from USA Staffing, redact the appropriate information, and upload the resumes back into the applicant record. By marking the redacted document as the 'Resume' document type and HM Viewable, only the redacted resumes will be displayed to the SMEs.

34. How does the system know which resume document to display in this area for the SME to review if multiple resumes are associated with an applicant?

The system will display the latest submitted document identified with the 'Resume' document type and set as HM Viewable.

HR Action – Prior to Sending SME Review

35. For highly specialized or technical jobs that have a Basic Education Requirement (BER), the HR Specialist would need to make BER determination along with eligibility to apply prior to sending resumes for the Structured Resume Review?

Yes. The HR Specialist generally would make BER/Individual Occupational Requirement determination along with eligibility (and Veterans Preference, if applicable) prior to the Structured Resume Review. This helps to ensure the SMEs are only using their time to review resumes of applicants who are eligible to be considered.

Furthermore, SMEs can only see applicant documents designated as resumes and only respond to the specific questions identified in the assessment.

36. To verify eligibility prior to sending the Structured Resume Review, it is assumed that an applicant list will be created separately?

That tends to be the quickest way, but a user can also do this from the applicant overview page, by applicant.

37. If also using a USA Hire assessment, how does HR know it's time to send the Structured Resume Review out?

The system is flexible. The only requirement is there is at least one applicant in PA status AND the Hurdle with the SME Evaluation assessment is active. It will be an agency decision regarding the timing of when they want to release the SME Review. We recommend proceeding with caution if the JOA is still open as applicants may be submitting new resumes. Even if the USA Hire assessment is completed and the applicant is out of PA, you will want to wait until the announcement close date to ensure you're allowing for the most recent application/resume. The queue of applicants to be reviewed updates as other applicants reach the appropriate status to be included in the Structured

Resume Review. The Review remains assigned to the SMEs until HR determines it is complete, after they have accepted all evaluations for all applicants eligible for this assessment. If using a Hurdle (i.e., cut point based on a business necessity rationale), it is imperative that all applicants have completed the previous assessment. You can check this by using assessment filters to see who completed the first hurdle and who did not (i.e., check for any still in pending status).

SME Resume Reviews

38. Can the SME instructions be edited?

No, the SME instructions are standardized in the system to ensure that SMEs get the appropriate instructions to conduct the structured resume review.

39. Is there a maximum number of SMEs that can be assigned to a Structured Resume Review?

No, the system currently only validates the minimum number of SMEs required to evaluate applicants and break ties, based on the assessment configuration. It is highly recommended that you identify and train/calibrate more than the minimum required number of SMEs up front to handle recusal scenarios, reduce the overall burden on all SMEs involved, and maximize the efficiency of the training/calibration process.

40. Will the applicant be the one answering the questions or does the SME answer the questions when they do their evaluation?

The SMEs respond to the SME Evaluation Items, which serve as the criteria for SME ratings when conducting a Structured Resume Review in USA Staffing. The specialized experience requirements (statements) serve as the basis for the SME Evaluation Items.

41. Can the Structured Resume Review be used to have the SME review transcripts for positive education?

No, USA Staffing also does not allow for any other document, other than the resume, to be sent via the review. Furthermore, SMEs generally do not have the necessary knowledge to evaluate education, nor is this generally the best use of their time. For these reasons, the Structured Resume Review is not recommended for positions for which an applicant could qualify solely or partially on education.

42. Can SMEs copy and paste content out of the resume into the justification box?

Generally, yes. However, applicants can use a variety of file types to upload their resume to USAJOBS - including image files like a PNG or JPEG. That file is then converted to a PDF, and SMEs use a standard PDF viewer in the side panel. If the applicant's document began as a Word doc, text-based pdf or text file, SMEs should be able to use copy/paste or even ctrl+f to find text. If they began with some other document type, the SME would likely see a PDF that is basically an image of text and not have copy and paste capability.

43. Why does a SME applicant review show that the SME has 4 hours to conduct their evaluation, but they have until a later date to return their responses?

The 4-hour time limit is the time allotted to review an individual applicant; the later date is the Due Date of the Review as a whole.

44. Why is there a 4-hour timer on each resume evaluation?

The timer exists to prevent hanging evaluation records (for example, if someone started an evaluation and exited the review, and may not be in the office the next day or week). The 4-hour expiration allows other SMEs to perform the evaluation within the same day without waiting a day or two, thus not hanging up the entire assessment/review for days or weeks.

45. As an SME, if I exit and have not completed the review, will the system pick up where I left off when I log back in?

The system does not save your responses until you click the Submit Evaluation button. Thus, any responses you enter prior to leaving without submitting them first will be lost.

46. Can an SME change their rating (e.g., if the HR Specialist returns the evaluation and the SME realizes they made a mistake)?

At this time, there is no functionality that allows the determination to be changed once an SME submits their evaluation. Only the justification statement can be changed. (Per the HR User Guide: "An SME will not be able to change their determination on a returned evaluation, only amend their justification notes.") However, it is something we are researching as a possible future enhancement.

As appropriate in the near-term, we suggest the HR User override the applicant's overall minimum qualification in the Rating Details area and then thoroughly document the reason in the Application Record notes area, including uploading additional documentation from the SME as needed. Important to note, the SME justification needs to support the SMEs final rating (e.g., HR would not want it to appear that they overruled the SME).

47. Can SME reviewers access information collected in the Assessment Questionnaire text boxes for purposes of the Structured Resume Review (e.g., if information as to where in the resume support for a given rating can be found is collected)?

No - not at this time. SME reviewers can access only the applicant's resume.

48. How can I determine when there are no further applicants for a given SME to evaluate?

The only time an SME would not be served an applicant is if there are no more available for them to evaluate. This is determined by looking at the total applicants to be evaluated, subtracting the ones with a final determination, subtracting the ones the user recused themselves from evaluating, and then subtracting the ones (not already excluded by the first 2 rules) where the user has already evaluated the applicant.

49. In a future upgrade, can/will OPM add a section for the SME to sign their SME agreement before reviewing candidates?

Please work with your account manager to document an enhancement request, so we can better understand the use cases.

Tiebreakers

50. Can the HR Specialist be a tiebreaker?

No. The Structured Resume Review is recommended for highly specialized or technical jobs for which SMEs are in a better position than HR professionals to interpret experience as described in applicants' resumes, including serving as tiebreaker SMEs. All evaluators must have Hiring Manager user accounts as the evaluation is done on the Hiring Manager view. HR professionals manage the overall process and review rating justifications provided by SMEs.

To note, HR professionals may serve as SMEs for HR-related job announcements, provided they did not apply to the announcement and are not working on the announcement/vacancy in an HR capacity.

51. Does HR need to initiate a separate tiebreaker review in the event two SMEs disagree?

No, tiebreaker evaluations are part of the original SME Review and are automatically generated and presented to SMEs. If Tiebreaker Only SMEs are identified on the Review, tiebreaker evaluations will only be presented to those SMEs; otherwise, any one of the SMEs assigned to the Review, who has not already evaluated the applicant, will be served the tiebreaker evaluation to complete. SMEs will not get subsequent emails each time a tiebreaker evaluation is needed. If HR would like, they can use the Evaluations sub-page within the Review to help identify when they may need to nudge SMEs to check the Review for tiebreaker evaluations toward the end of the process.

52. When is it recommend to designate a Tiebreaker Only SME on the review?

It is recommended to only identify a Tiebreaker Only SME if all ties should be broken by specific individuals, due to a higher level of knowledge and experience, higher grade level, or potentially for SMEs supplied by other agencies, if appropriate. Otherwise, it is best to let any SME be a tiebreaker to reduce bottlenecks in the evaluation process.

53. If all 4 specialized experience statements for a single applicant require a tiebreaker SME, does a tiebreaker SME rate all 4 or only until both SMEs agree there is a 'Fail'?

The system is currently designed to require the tiebreaker SME answer all 4 questions in that scenario. All ties must be broken, even if the applicant is already rated as not qualified.

Recusals

54. Does the staffer get notified of a recusal?

HR will not be notified if an SME recuses themselves. It is recommended that more than 3 SMEs be assigned to the Review, in the event any one SME needs to recuse. We are considering adding an email capability after the initial launch, as well as other functionality for HR around recusals.

HR Quality Control

55. How do we handle a situation in which an HR Specialist inadvertently accepts an evaluation that should have been returned to the SME for edit? Are we able to reverse or overrule the acceptance and send it back to the SME for correction?

Unfortunately, there is not a way to "undo" the acceptance of the evaluation at this time. Suggested work-arounds for the HR Specialist (or another HR user that is overseeing the evaluations): Instruct the SME user to send a Word document or email with the additional justification. Name the file something clear (e.g., 'SME Harnish's Expanded Justification for Applicant Kayla Jones') and upload it to the applicant record as an "Other" document type.

Add a note documenting that you asked and uploaded additional justification files on the applicant record. This document method is recommended as:

- It allows the SME to document it themselves and send it to you.
- It makes it easier to find if there needs to be a future review of what occurred.
- It will handle a lengthy explanation better than 'notes' on an applicant record could.

Ask the SME for additional justification and add it as a note to the applicant record.

56. On the 'SME Evaluations, Evaluations Progress' dashboard, does the 'Not Started' tally include tiebreaker evaluations?

No, tiebreaker evaluations start out in a 'pending' status, even if they are not yet assigned to an SME. Thus, tiebreaker evaluations are reflected under 'In Progress' on the dashboard.

57. What exactly is being displayed on the Tiebreaker Evaluations Overview of the SME Evaluations Dashboard?

The tiebreaker is a running count of how many tiebreaker evaluations are created. Each time the need for a tiebreaker occurs, the count increments. When the resume reviews are complete, the tiebreaker count will reflect the total number of tiebreakers that were required. Each applicant will only ever have one tiebreaker evaluation (i.e., tiebreaker evaluations are counted at the applicant level regardless of how many individual specialized experience statements the SME serving as the tiebreaker is presented to review).