

Subject Matter Expert Evaluation HR User Guide

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What Is a Subject Matter Expert Evaluation?

A Subject Matter Expert (SME) Evaluation is one of four **Assessment Types** available in USA Staffing, the other three being Questionnaire, Manual, and External (i.e., USA Hire). An SME Evaluation allows HR Users to interact directly with the SMEs who will evaluate applicants using different **Assessment Methods**.

This guide will illustrate several best practices for creating and using an SME Evaluation in accordance with the recent Executive Order, but the functionality itself is very flexible. Agencies can use it in several different ways depending on the job analysis, consultation with the selecting official, and agency internal guidance. If you are considering a new assessment process using this functionality, we recommend trying it out in the USA Staffing Training environment first, so you can gain some hands-on experience with each piece of the process before using it in a live vacancy.

What Different Assessment Methods are available?



The only assessment method currently available under the SME Evaluation assessment type is the Structured Resume Review. We will add additional assessment methods as we continue to refine system functionality.

Structured Resume Review

OPM defines a Structured Resume Review as a screening (pass/fail) assessment whereby a trained panel of two or more SMEs follows a systematic process to review an applicant's resume and come to agreement on whether the applicant has the required specialized experience necessary to successfully perform the job. The Structured Resume Review is intended to screen out individuals who do not have the specialized experience required. This method does not identify best qualified applicants, provide a numerical score, or determine a category rating placement.

In USA Staffing this assessment method presents applicants' resumes to each of the SMEs, one at a time, along with the specialized experience requirements (i.e., SME Evaluation Items), collects the SMEs' evaluations and justifications, sends applicant resumes to a tiebreaker SME if there are discrepancies, and presents the information in an organized way to the HR User.

A self-paced online training course (approximately 3 to 4 hours) is available to all Federal agencies at no charge through the USA Staffing Online Course Portal at <https://usastaffing.usalearning.gov/login/index.php>

HR users should also reference the SME Evaluation Assessment Methods Guide located at <https://help.usastaffing.gov/ResourceCenter/index.php/Resources> for additional information

regarding SME Evaluation Assessment Methodology and the Structured Resume Review Assessment Method.



The SME Evaluation assessment type **cannot** be used in vacancies that have multiple grades, multiple series, or multiple specialties.

The SME Evaluation

As stated in the beginning of this guide, an SME Evaluation is the Assessment Type that provides the ability to use a Structured Resume Review Assessment Method to carry out a Structured Resume Review in USA Staffing.

The system defaults in USA Staffing are designed for compliance with the requirements of Executive Order 13932. At a high level, a Structured Resume Review that meets the Executive Order involves the following steps:

- Two SMEs independently review an applicant's resume against each specialized experience requirement targeted for the resume review.
- Each SME independently determines whether or not the applicant meets each specialized experience requirement based on the content of the applicant's resume.
- Each SME provides a justification for each Yes/No rating.
 - When rating 'Yes' (resume reflects the required experience), SMEs indicate where in the resume they found support for their rating (i.e., year(s) experience gained, as well as position title as needed for clarity).
 - When rating 'No' (resume does not reflect the required experience), SMEs indicate that the resume reflects insufficient evidence of the required experience, providing justification needed to help others to retrace their decision.
- If the two SMEs disagree on one or more specialized experience requirement(s), a third tiebreaker SME reviews documentation from the two SMEs to make a final determination.

Important to note, although the steps outlined above reflect the system defaults and are consistent with Executive Order 13932 requirements, USA Staffing functionality offers flexibilities. The system will permit a single SME to carry out a resume review. The system also does not require SMEs to provide justifications for each rating. However, deviating from the system defaults may result in an assessment process that is not compliant with EO 13932 resulting in the need for an additional assessment prior to certification.

SME Evaluations can be added to an Assessment Package Template or an individual vacancy. Assessments of any type must be added to your vacancy before it is released and opened on USAJOBS. Additionally, to use the SME Evaluation functionality, your vacancy must accept and

require resumes. You should also place language in the *How You Will Be Evaluated* section of the announcement that explains to the applicant any additional assessment steps that will occur after they submit their application (see sample wording in the SME Evaluation Assessment Methods Guide).

SME Evaluations can also be combined with other types of assessments in the same assessment package, including other SME Evaluations, if needed. The settings for each assessment are independent of each other and can be configured on their respective Assessment Information pages according to your agency's needs and internal business rules.

Assessment Package Tab

If there aren't any assessments in the vacancy's Assessment Package, you'll be prompted to choose an Assessment Path.

Online Help has instructions for adding a SME Evaluation assessment:

https://help.usastaffing.gov/USAS/index.php?title=Creating_a_SME_Evaluation_assessment

Assessment Information

PLEASE NOTE: The SME Evaluation assessment type is available as an option only if the vacancy contains a single rating combination, such as GS-0403-13. SME Evaluation will **not** appear as an option if the vacancy has multiple grades, series, or specialties. If additional rating combinations are added after the Assessment Package is completed, USA Staffing will automatically mark the Assessment Package as incomplete and prevent HR Users from completing the Assessment Package until the additional rating combinations or the SME Evaluation assessment is removed.

Select either Structured Resume Review (EO Compliant) or Structured Resume Review from the Assessment Method dropdown.

- a. When you select Structured Resume Review (EO Compliant), USA Staffing will set the number of SME evaluations required to 2 and require evaluation justification notes for all responses. These defaults help the HR User ensure the assessment meets the intent of Executive Order 13932 (EO). Selecting this option doesn't guarantee the assessment meets the EO's intent but rather ensures the HR User is meeting minimum requirements to do so.
- b. When you select Structured Resume Review, USA Staffing allows the HR User the flexibility to set the number of SME evaluations to 1 or 2, and require evaluation justification notes only for disqualifying responses, only for qualifying responses, or for all responses, according to the agency's needs. Keep in mind, however, that an assessment requiring fewer than 2 SME evaluations and not requiring justification notes for all responses will not meet the requirements of EO 13932.

Competencies

SME Evaluation type assessments do not require the use of Competencies. If you do choose to use them, you can add them on the Competencies tab by selecting them from an existing competency network, or if you have the proper permissions, by creating them manually.



Any competencies you add to your SME Evaluation type assessment will be displayed in USAJOBS if you include a *Competencies List* or *Competencies Bullets* data insert in your announcement. If you're assessing the same competency between multiple assessments, make sure you use the same Competency ID in each of those assessments, so they aren't duplicated in the data insert list.

SME Evaluation Items

The SME Evaluation Items page is where you add the specialized experience requirements the SMEs will use when reviewing each resume to evaluate if an applicant possesses the required specialized experience. These items are based on the specialized experience requirements defined in the Job Analysis. Generally, applicants must have at least one year (52 weeks) of full-time experience equivalent to the next lower grade level in the Federal service (or comparable level of experience from outside the Federal service) to meet the specialized experience requirements.

These specialized experience requirements are not the same as the Individual Occupation Requirements (IORs) or other basic requirements for the advertised position. These may include education requirements or selective placement factors which are typically confirmed through supporting documentation such as transcripts, certifications, and licenses. HR Users should conduct this review prior to sending the SME Review. The SME will only have access to the applicants' resumes when conducting the SME Review.

Each SME Evaluation Item requires a header and a stem. The header may be the competency associated with, or an abbreviated version of, the specialized experience requirement. The stem is the specialized experience requirement phrased in a way that prompts a "yes/no" response from the SME. For example:

(Header) Microbiology

(Stem) Resume reflects at least one year of specialized experience equivalent to the GS-12 level planning microbiological field and laboratory investigations involving novel or difficult-to-identify pathogens.

Serotyping

Resume reflects at least one year of specialized experience equivalent to the GS-12 level serotyping immune-based and/or molecular assays to detect emerging threats such as viruses, bacteria, proteins and/or peptides.

Encapsulation

Resume reflects at least one year of specialized experience equivalent to the GS-12 level utilizing nanoparticle and/or microparticle production processes for encapsulation and/or characterization of encapsulated material.

Aerosolization

Resume reflects at least one year of specialized experience equivalent to the GS-12 level aerosolizing nano and/or microencapsulated material.

SME Evaluation Items can be added by importing them from the SME Evaluation Items Library or by creating them manually.

Online Help has instructions for adding a SME Evaluation Item from a Library:

https://help.usastaffing.gov/USAS/index.php?title=Adding_an_item_to_a_SME_Evaluation_from_the_library

Online Help has instructions for adding a SME Evaluation Item Manually:

https://help.usastaffing.gov/USAS/index.php?title=Adding_an_item_to_a_SME_Evaluation

Screen-Out Criteria

Each SME Evaluation Item is a Screen-out Question, so each one will need its own Screen-out Criteria. The HR User adds these on the Screen-Out Criteria page. Helpful tip: to keep things organized, use the SME Evaluation Item Header as the name for the screen-out.

Online Help has instructions for adding a screen-out:

https://helpusastaffing.gov/USAS/index.php?title=Adding_a_screen-out

The default code is **IQSM** - *You are ineligible for this position because subject matter experts have determined you do not meet the required qualifications as described in the job announcement.*

Test Plan

The Test Plan page is where the HR User ensures the screen-outs are correctly configured through various test scenarios.

Online Help has instructions for adding a screen-out:

https://help.usastaffing.gov/USAS/index.php?title=Adding_a_screen-out

USA Staffing only requires one passing test scenario to complete the assessment, but a best practice is to create a qualifying (i.e., ELTE) and at least one disqualifying (i.e., IQSM) scenario. Regardless of the number of scenarios you create, all must have green checkmarks.

Checklist

The Checklist page performs some behind-the-scenes validations to make sure the SME Evaluation Assessment is configured correctly. If your assessment passes, you'll see all green checkmarks.

Online Help has more information about the assessment checklist page:

https://help.usastaffing.gov/USAS/index.php?title=Assessment_Checklist

Completing the Assessment Package

At this point, you are finished creating the SME Evaluation assessment. You are now free to add additional assessments and hurdles, if needed, or complete the assessment package and continue with the announcement.

The SME Review

The Reviews page is where you create a review or access an existing review.

Review Information

The Review Information page is where the HR User adds basic information about the review such as the review's name, due date, and any instructions needed.



Each SME Evaluation Assessment tied to a vacancy can be sent only once on a review. The same SME Evaluation Assessment cannot be sent on more than one review per vacancy.

Online Help has instructions for Creating a Subject Matter Expert (SME) review:

[https://help.usastaffing.gov/USAS/index.php?title=Creating_a_Subject_Matter_Expert_\(SME\)_review](https://help.usastaffing.gov/USAS/index.php?title=Creating_a_Subject_Matter_Expert_(SME)_review)

Review Assignments

The Review Assignments page is where you select the SMEs who will conduct the Structured Resume Review. HR Users should ensure they are only selecting Hiring Manager Users who have received the proper training and are qualified to act as an SME in this context. USA Staffing does not automatically add the requester as one of the reviewers, because they might not be considered an SME. HR users may still manually assign the Requester if they would like the Hiring Manager to be involved in the review process. Add as many SMEs, including tiebreakers, as needed.

Online Help has instructions for adding a reviewer to a review:

https://help.usastaffing.gov/USAS/index.php?title=Adding_a_reviewer_to_a_review



If the individual does not appear in the search results, try adjusting your search criteria. If they still do not appear, you will need to confirm they have an account in USA Staffing before proceeding.

After sending the review, if an SME Reviewer changes roles, leaves the organization, or for any other reason should not be involved in the review, HR users can mark the SME Reviewer as “Inactive”. An “Inactive” SME Reviewer will no longer be assigned new evaluations but remain available to correct

justifications as needed. It is not recommended that HR mark SME Reviewers as “Inactive” simply because they are unavailable temporarily.

Evaluations

HR Users can monitor the SMEs’ progress in the Evaluation Progress and Overview sections of the Evaluations page. These sections display the total number of SME Evaluations tied to the review, how many tiebreaker evaluations are needed, and the ratio of applicant evaluations completed, as well as progress bars showing the number of evaluations in each status.

If a SME Evaluator recuses themselves from an applicant evaluation, a banner will appear to alert the HR User(s) that additional actions may be needed. This information can also be found on the Recusals tab.

Online Help has more information about the evaluations page:

<https://help.usastaffing.gov/USAS/index.php?title=Evaluations>

Once an SME Reviewer submits an evaluation, the HR User will need to review it and either accept it or return it to the SME so they can amend one or more justification determination and/or the notes. An SME will not be able to change their determination on a returned evaluation, only amend their justification notes.

Online Help has instructions for viewing an applicant evaluation:

<https://help.usastaffing.gov/USAS/index.php?title=Viewing an applicant evaluation>

Online Help has instructions for Accepting an applicant evaluation based on subject matter expert review:

<https://help.usastaffing.gov/USAS/index.php?title=Accepting an applicant evaluation based on subject matter expert review>

Online Help has instructions for returning a subject matter expert evaluation:

<https://help.usastaffing.gov/USAS/index.php?title=Returning a subject matter expert evaluation>

Once the HR User has accepted all the SME Evaluations, the SME Review is considered complete, and the HR User can move on to the next steps in their recruitment process.