



## Reporting Consumer Forum Questions and Answers

The USA Staffing Reporting and Analytics team hosts monthly forums for report consumers that have completed the Cognos Consumer Training with the opportunity to ask outstanding questions from the training, develop a deeper understanding of the Cognos tool and Power BI as used to access and run existing reports, and request demonstrations of consumer functionality. The agenda for the forums is determined by the participants.

This document provides a running list of the questions asked during the forums, as well as the responses provided, to serve as a reference for report consumers. Questions are organized by topic and include the date of the forum at which they were received.

### Cognos Training, Help, Forums, and Workgroups

#### 05.18.2023 - What is Cognos Consumer Training?

Cognos Consumer Training provides an overview of USA Staffing data and Cognos and includes detailed modules that cover the basics of running and subscribing to standard reports as well as an overview of the most popular reports. The session also includes an overview of Applicant Flow Data. The purpose of the training is to provide HR users with the skills to fully leverage the data available through USA Staffing Cognos. Information about the training, including how to access the virtual, self-paced module can be found on both the User Training and the Reporting and Analytics pages of the [USA Staffing Resource Center](#).

#### 07.20.2023 – Are recordings of the Cognos Consumer Forums available?

The Cognos Consumer Forums are not recorded, but the Questions and Answers document is continually updated based on each forum's discussion. The latest version of the document can be found on the USA Staffing Resource Center's [Cognos Consumer Forum](#) page.

#### 10.19.2023 – What information should be included in a Help Desk ticket?

Including as much information as possible will help the Help Desk provide more accurate and timely responses. At a minimum, please include the report name, exact error text with the "Details" area expanded (copy/paste!), file path, time of day the report was run, and what parameters were selected/used in the report.



## Data Items

### **06.15.2023 and 09.21.2023 – How can I find reportable Hiring Data Warehouse fields and their definitions? Is the data dictionary located anywhere else outside of the report or is it just in Cognos?**

The [Reporting and Analytics](#) page of the [USA Staffing Resource Center](#) provides links to reporting job aids, overviews, presentations, recordings and other helpful reporting information. A Hiring Data Warehouse Data Dictionary file is available in the Reporting Package Resources section. Alternatively, the Cognos Package Outline Report is available in Cognos in the 'Team Content' folder. This report can be run to export a live view of all available fields and their descriptions for all data packages.

### **07.20.2023 – How are announcements created or defined as “Open, Continuous” in USAS?**

An announcement that was created for a vacancy with the “Standing Register” vacancy type will appear as “Open, Continuous” in USA Staffing and reporting.

### **07.20.2023 – Before the “Remote Job” indicator existed in USAS, how were remote positions identified?**

Before the “Remote Job” indicator, use of the “Location Negotiable After Selection, United States” location description and additional clarifications in the announcement were often used to identify remote positions. The “Telework Eligible” indicator was added to the Vacancy Position Information page in June 2018. With the introduction of the “Remote Job” indicator mid-2022, the “Anywhere in the U.S. (Remote Job)” location and 99OP00001 geographic location code is now typically used for remote positions. The standard “Announcement Status Report” and “Announcement Status Dashboard” (located in Cognos at USA Staffing Packages and Folders > Hiring Data Warehouse > Announcement) offer optional prompts for announcement locations.

### **09.21.2023 – How should I read the data dictionary? Does this tell me where I can find these data items in reports? Is there a matrix available that would tell you the name of the report where those fields are available?**

The data dictionary layout reflects the data package structure in Cognos. The main folders, such as Announcements and Applicants, are used to organize query subjects. Main folders are further divided into sub-folders and query subjects. Within query subjects, you can find individual query items and their definitions. You can search for a query item and then trace the location within the Cognos data package folder structure by tracing the location through the query subject, sub-folder and main folder. The organization of folders and query subjects largely follows the organization of fields within tabs in the USA Staffing interface.

The data dictionary provides all of the query items within the data warehouse. The Cognos Reports List provides a list of all Cognos reports that you have permission to. The data dictionary will not tell you where the data items are present in a report, however, you can use the Search functionality in Cognos (Search option in left side panel menu) to search for keywords and find reports that contain those keywords. You can narrow your search results using the funnel icon to limit results by type (Data, Packages, Reports, etc.) or when last modified.

## Data Refreshes

### **09.21.2023 – What is the currency of the data in HDW? Can you tell me the specific times (or timeframes) during the day that the data is update in HDW?**

Data in the Hiring Data Warehouse (HDW) is not refreshed on a set schedule. The updates are done on a rolling basis. The times will vary based on the volume of any given tenant. The goal is for refreshes to occur every 8 hours, or at least three times a day, but that can be extended if there is a large volume of data being updated.

## Power BI

### **09.21.2023 – Will standard Cognos reports be recreated in Power BI? Will users have access to Power BI datasets?**

USA Staffing will build new Power BI reports to fill the needs met by current Cognos reports but there will not be a 1:1 replacement or recreation of Cognos reports since we plan to leverage the visualization and analytics capabilities in Power BI. Our strategy is to conduct customer ideation sessions to determine reporting and analytical questions to answer in the Power BI reports. There may be instances where a tabular or list report is important for operational purposes so Power BI reports will offer those when necessary. All Power BI reports will be accompanied by an underlying Power BI dataset, which customers will be able to leverage to build their own custom reports or connect to and combine with internal agency data.

### **02.15.2024 – Is USA Staffing transitioning from Cognos reports to Power BI reports and eliminating Cognos?**

Yes, USA Staffing is gradually transitioning from reporting in Cognos to reporting in Power BI with the eventual goal of retiring Cognos.

### **02.15.2024 – Is there a separate process document for signing on with Azure Directory Federation Services (AD FS)?**

No, the existing Microsoft Authenticator App Job Aid

([https://help.usastaffing.gov/ResourceCenter/images/a/a4/Microsoft\\_Authenticator\\_App\\_Job\\_Aid\\_-\\_June\\_2023.pdf](https://help.usastaffing.gov/ResourceCenter/images/a/a4/Microsoft_Authenticator_App_Job_Aid_-_June_2023.pdf))

on page 3 covers scenarios where a user is either prompted for additional authentication and must use the Authenticator app or is prompted for their PIN and taken directly to connect.opm.gov. Agencies have two options for “phishing resistant” authentications: certificate-based authentication (CBA) using PIV/CAC or federated AD FS with X.509 Certificates. To the end user, the impact of phishing resistant authentication will be the same in that they will not be prompted for additional authentication using the Authenticator app.

### **02.15.2024 - How will scheduled reports be impacted? Will the scheduled reports be moved to Power BI? Or will new scheduled reports need to be setup in Power BI?**

Reports will need to be rebuilt within Power BI due to changes in the underlying data models, so scheduled reports in Cognos will not continue once Cognos is retired. Power BI allows users to subscribe to a report but there are key differences between scheduled reports in Cognos and report subscriptions in Power BI. Power BI report subscriptions provide the option to attach the full report as a PDF (.pdf) or Microsoft PowerPoint (.pptx) file and/or provide a link to the report in the email and a preview image of the report (filtered by the subscriber’s row-level security). The subscription emails will come from [no-reply-powerbi@microsoft.com](mailto:no-reply-powerbi@microsoft.com). A key difference from Cognos scheduled reports is that in Power BI you will not be able to subscribe others to a report unless the report is hosted in an organizational workspace where you have a Contributor role and a Pro license. You will also not be able to use group email aliases within your agency since those do not exist in the connect.opm.gov domain.

### **02.15.2024 - Is there a timeline for the job aids being available in Power BI?**

Job aids will be released concurrently with each Power BI data package and can be accessed within each Power BI app.

### **02.15.2024 - Will Cognos Custom Report Author roles be phased out, or will these folks be given access to a Power BI dataset or access to the backend of USA Staffing?**

Current permissions and user types in USA Staffing will remain the same. Reports Only or AFD Only user types will access connect.opm.gov directly by going to <https://app.powerbigov.us/home?ctid=3ce07c0b-30c5-4bcd-ad92-238975b649af>.

In Power BI, everyone will have the ability to create reports and save them to their personal workspace. A Pro license will be required to publish to a shared organization workspace.

#### **02.15.2024 – When will USA Staffing be fully transitioned from Cognos to Power BI?**

This transition will be complete by October 2025. During this transition period we are working to get content available in Power BI and provide training to users so that everyone is comfortable with Power BI prior to Cognos being retired.

#### **02.15.2024 – How can I access existing OPM Power BI resources?**

Existing OPM Power BI resources can be located on the Reporting and Analytics page within the USA Staffing Resource Center, located at [https://help.usastaffing.gov/ResourceCenter/index.php/Reporting\\_and\\_Analytics](https://help.usastaffing.gov/ResourceCenter/index.php/Reporting_and_Analytics). The “Power BI Training Resources” section is continually expanding.

#### **02.15.2024 – Will Pro licenses be an additional cost?**

At this time Pro license costs will be covered by your existing USA Staffing license agreements – so no additional costs to your agency. However, due to the added costs we are implementing a Pro License Request and Approval Process to closely manage the number of users assigned a Pro License. The Power BI User Based Licensing Job Aid ([https://help.usastaffing.gov/ResourceCenter/images/a/af/Power\\_BI\\_User-based\\_Licensing\\_Job\\_Aid\\_Jan2024.pdf](https://help.usastaffing.gov/ResourceCenter/images/a/af/Power_BI_User-based_Licensing_Job_Aid_Jan2024.pdf)) is available in the Reporting and Analytics section of the Resource Center to help agencies determine which users should have Pro licenses.

#### **02.15.2024 – How can someone get access to the Power BI workspaces for our agency?**

Access to Power BI workspaces is controlled by permissions in USA Staffing. If you have permissions to a Staffing Organization, you will have access to that organization’s workspace in Power BI.

#### **02.15.2024 – Will a data connection exist for the ability to query data from an external SQL environment?**

No, this will not be an option. There are two options to connect to USA Staffing data. One is using the data APIs and the other option is to connect to the USA Staffing semantic models in Power BI. USA Staffing Data API documentation can be found at <https://developer.usastaffing.gov/Documentation/Overview>.

#### **02.15.2024 – Will users accessing Power BI that are sent the scheduled reports by email need a license to access the reports?**

Access to Power BI is limited to USA Staffing users and their existing permissions control what data they will be able to see in reports. A link from a report subscription does not grant an individual access to USA Staffing’s Power BI environment. The only user types in USA Staffing that can currently view data in Power BI are HR Users, Reports Only Users, and Applicant Flow Data Only users. It’s not currently in scope for Onboarding Users and Hiring Manager Users to access data in reports in Power BI.

#### **02.15.2024 – Will the reports be available in Excel as they are now?**

As we build the new standard reports in Power BI, we are reviewing reporting needs to determine the best way to meet them through Power BI. Power BI’s benefits come from the power of analyzing data through visualizations and the interactions among slicers and visuals, but we recognize that operational functions also require working with lists of data. In these instances, we will be building paginated reports, which are reports that are designed to be printed and display the data in a table. In other cases, we will create drill through reports that will provide detailed information in a tabular format, which can easily be exported to Excel. Summary data from visuals can also be exported to Excel.

#### **02.15.2024 – Will we have a transition from Stage to Production regarding using Power BI on reporting?**

At this time, we only have a Production data available in Power BI.

### **03.21.2024 – Will we have the ability to create our own reports in Power BI?**

Yes, users will be given Build access to the semantic models in Power BI that support the standardized reports we are creating.

### **03.21.2024 – If we have a client-side instance of Power BI, can we connect to your source, or do we have to go through the web interface you provide?**

If you already have Power BI in your home agency, you will need to separately log into connect.opm.gov to access Power BI's Online Service or separately authenticate into connect.opm.gov to access USA Staffing semantic models in Power BI Desktop. Microsoft does not currently allow cross tenant data access in the government cloud.

## **Report Functionality**

### **05.18.2023 - My report has an in-page filter; how can I make multiple selections?**

The report specified is a custom report developed by the agency. As developed, the in-page filter (or prompt) only allows for the user to select one Customer at a time. It is possible for Cognos reports and filters to allow for multiple selections, however this change must be made by a Cognos report author. We recommend reaching out to the team that develops and manages your agency's custom reports to request this update to the report.

### **06.15.2023 – How can I run a report in the background?**

To run a Cognos report in the background (in order to keep using Cognos while it completes), first navigate to the folder housing the report. Then click on the three-dot ellipsis to the right of the report name and select 'Run as'. Toggle 'Run in Background' to 'Yes', and select either 'Now' or a specific time in the future. Confirm that 'Prompt me' is selected. Under 'Format', Excel or CSV are the most commonly selected options. To have the report emailed, select the 'Send report by email' box and provide the email address(es) of the individual(s) that should receive the report (note that full email addresses must be provided; email distribution lists are not accepted). Select 'Run.' To access saved reports, click again on the ellipsis, then select 'View versions.'

### **06.15.2023 – How can I subscribe to a report?**

To subscribe to a report, the report must be run first using the same prompt values as you would like used in subsequent runs. After completing the prompt page and running the report, click the ellipsis in the upper right corner and select "Subscribe". Then, you can select the day or days, time, output format, and the delivery method from the window that pops up. To manage subscriptions, click the person icon in the upper right, and select "My schedules and subscriptions." There you can enable, disable, or delete any subscriptions you've created.

### **06.15.2023 – Where can I find the outputs of the reports I have subscribed to?**

Before subscribing to a report, you must enable "Show Hidden Entries" in My preferences page. To do so, select "My Preferences" from the person symbol in the upper right corner and make sure "Show Hidden Entries" is turned on. Once this is done, you may find your report outputs in My Content > Subscriptions.

### **06.15.2023 – What do the different report subscription statuses mean?**

First, to see current Cognos report subscriptions, click the person icon in the upper right, then select 'My schedules and subscriptions.' A job that is currently running is 'executing,' a job that is queued is 'pending', a job that is temporarily waiting for resources (e.g., for a database lock to clear due to an ongoing transaction, or for available email infrastructure) is 'waiting' or 'inactive', and a report that was manually paused is 'suspended.'

### **06.15.2023 – How can I change the filters that appear on the prompt page?**

The design of reports can be altered by users with report author permissions. The best first step is to communicate with a Cognos report author in your organization – they can help edit and create a copy of an existing report. Alternatively, you may submit a USA Staffing Help Desk ticket and the reporting team can work with you on edits to a copy of the report.

### **06.15.2023 – How are the Hiring Data Warehouse and Staffing Reports different?**

The Hiring Data Warehouse is generally much faster at running reports and offers new data approximately three times per day. Staffing Reports offers near-real-time information but may take significantly longer to generate report output. Using Hiring Data Warehouse reports, if available, is the recommended best practice. For authoring reports, the Hiring Data Warehouse is designed to be more user-friendly, whereas Staffing Reports requires close knowledge of the data structure and relationships.

### **06.15.2023 – How often is Hiring Data Warehouse data refreshed?**

The Hiring Data Warehouse snapshots refresh, on average, three times per day. The 'Hiring Data Warehouse Last Modified Report' (located in Team Content > USA Staffing Packages and Folders > Hiring Data Warehouse) provides the most recent time that data has been updated in USA Staffing and the Hiring Data Warehouse for a given tenant. Note that the date and time is based on the most recently updated record within the USA Staffing interface; if the interface has not been updated recently, the date provided in this report will be prior to the last HDW refresh.

### **09.21.2023 – I need to report on the data from the onboarding form questionnaires. Can you please let me know where those responses are located in Cognos? Or, if those are available for us to report on?**

Responses to certain onboarding forms are available for reporting in the Benefits Information query subject within the Hiring Data Warehouse. This query subject is located in the New Hires main folder, New Hire Information sub-folder.

### **09.21.2023 – Why would you use HDW over Staffing Reports?**

The Hiring Data Warehouse (HDW) contains the same fields as Staffing Reports (with few exceptions), and is specially designed to rarely require joins, making it much simpler to use. The data within HDW is optimized for improved reporting performance, and finally, there are pre-calculated metrics within HDW like Application, Certificate, and Vacancy Metrics that are more efficient than manually calculating metrics in Cognos.

### **10.19.2023 – Are the Stage or Training environments ever refreshed with Production data?**

No – these environments pull from environment-specific sets of data and do not pull in Production data.

### **10.19.2023 –How can a user verify the type of permissions they have?**

For users who have access to USA Staffing, clicking on Profile in the top right of the USA Staffing interface will allow them to see two permissions-related pieces of information. The first, located in the top right of the Profile page in the Account Details section, is a toggle identifying if the user has Applicant Flow Database access. The AFD toggle allows for reporting on demographic information on applicants but is limited in who has access.

In the Permissions section towards the bottom of the USA Staffing interface, users can see which offices and customers that they have access to. Office-based permissions determine what data a user can pull when using Cognos as well as what they see in the USA Staffing interface.

Finally, within Cognos, the Staffing Administration folder contains a Reports Author List report. This report will let a user know who within a user's organization has author permissions. This will allow the user to reach out to those individuals for assistance with reports and/or data they may not have access to.

## Report Output

### 05.18.2023 - Why can't I see data for all of my Customers in a report?

The Hiring Data Warehouse is focused on providing data for staffing and onboarding activities that are carried out in the USA Staffing interface rather than the administrative setup of organizations, offices, and customers within USA Staffing. If one or more specific Customers is not included in the output of a report, the most likely reason is that there were no activities for that Customer that met the specifications in the data filters (e.g., new hire status, date range of an activity) applied when running the report.

If you are aware of specific instances where data for a Customer (or other entity) *does* meet the specifications in the data filters applied when running the report and the Customer (or other entity) *is not* included in the report output, reach out to the USA Staffing Reporting and Analytics team by either submitting a Help Desk ticket or emailing [USAStaffingData@opm.gov](mailto:USAStaffingData@opm.gov). When reaching out, please identify the name and location of the report, the output of the report, and information about what data is missing (e.g., Customer Name, request number, vacancy number, new hire number) so that we can effectively research and troubleshoot.

### 08.17.2023 – How can I discover all the reports I have access to?

The 'Cognos Reports List' report provides the location, title, and description of each report you have access to, including standard reports and custom reports for offices and organizations to which you have permissions. There is an optional prompt when running this report to narrow the results to relevant reports. To access this report, after logging into Cognos, select the 'Team content' folder on the leftmost pane, then select 'USA Staffing Packages and Folders.' Click on 'Cognos Reports List' report to run it (or select the ellipsis and click 'Run as' for different output options).

Another way to quickly navigate to or find relevant reports is the 'Search' functionality on the leftmost Cognos pane. After clicking on 'Search', enter one or more keywords in the 'Search all your data' field. Adding terms will expand the search. Enclosing a phrase inside quotes (e.g., "Cognos Reports") will search for that exact phrase. The search is case sensitive inside quotes.

### 08.17.2023 – What are some tips if my report is having difficulty running?

Narrowing the range of data being queried can significantly improve report speed. Selecting one month at a time, for example, will likely run much faster than pulling an entire year of data at once. Similarly, one organization will typically run faster than all organizations. Some variation in speed may occur at different times of day as well, depending on peak usage rates across the system. Consider running a report in the background for long-running reports. To do so, click the ellipsis next to a report name, select 'Run as', toggle the 'Run in background' option on, switch from 'Now' to 'Later,' then select the desired time. You may also select a variety of Delivery options for the report output.

- Save
  - "Save report" option: once the report has completed, the report output can be accessed by clicking the ellipsis next to the report name and selecting "View versions." Note that if the report is a standard report published by the USA Staffing Program Office this option is not available.
  - "Save as a report view" option: once the report has completed, navigate to the folder specified when setting the report to run in the background.

- Send report by email
  - Provide the email addresses of the individuals to receive an emailed copy of the report output. Note there is a 15MB size limit to attachments.
- Print: this option is not available

To review the status of reports running in the background, click on the person icon in the upper right corner, then select 'My schedules and subscriptions' and toggle between current, past, upcoming, and scheduled report views.

If the interface is behaving unexpectedly or you are experiencing login issues, consider clearing your web browser's cache. To do so, press Control-Shift-Delete on your keyboard, then follow your browser's prompts to clear all cache data. Close your browser, reopen, and navigate again to Cognos.

### **09.21.2023 – If a user if AFD only, can he/she access the Cognos Data Dictionary and Cognos Outline reports within Cognos?**

Yes, but the report output will be limited to their permissions. AFD Only users can reference the data dictionaries available on the [Reporting and Analytics](#) page of the [USA Staffing Resource Center](#).

### **10.19.2023 – If a report is deleted, will it still show up as subscribed?**

In general, the report will still be listed in your subscribed reports, but will throw an error when it tries to run. Users can look at versions of the subscribed report by clicking on the three dots to the far right of the report name under the Schedules view. In the drop down that appears, select 'View Versions' and you can see if anything has changed.

Note that from the main Schedule view, it will look like everything is normal and the report is still active. Going to the Past view will show any failed reports, which will include the one(s) that has been deleted. Once a user identifies the failed report, they can disable its schedule.

### **03.21.2024 – What explains negative numbers in the [Total Not Referred] field in the Vacancy Overview Report?**

The [Total Not Referred] field is calculated by subtracting [Total Referred] from [Total Eligible]. [Total Referred] is calculated through a distinct count of any applicants included on a certificate for a given vacancy. In cases where [Total Eligible] is reduced due to withdrawals or declinations, [Total Not Referred] may display as negative.

## **USA Staffing Interface**

### **05.18.2023 – Is it possible to include a 'buffer' between applicants when printing documents from a certificate?**

This question is in reference to functionality in the USA Staffing interface, which allows for batch printing applicant responses to assessments along with any documents submitted. The challenge described is that all applicants referred are included in a single 'batch' and no clear indication of which document belongs to each applicant. This functionality is outside the scope of the reporting teams since it is within the USA Staffing interface. We recommend reaching out to your USA Staffing Account Manager to find out if the functionality exists to insert some kind of buffer or to submit a change request to make this functionality available.



### **08.17.2023 – How do I submit a USA Staffing or Cognos help desk ticket?**

In USA Staffing, click on the question mark icon below the user name in the upper right corner, then select 'Submit a Help Ticket.' Enter a subject and more detailed information in the description section (including the specific report name and location that the question pertains to or any specific error messages). Reports-only or applicant flow data users may reach out to a USA Staffing account manager for help submitting a ticket or simply email the help desk team directly at [USAStaffingData@opm.gov](mailto:USAStaffingData@opm.gov).

### **08.17.2023 – Is it possible to access Cognos directly rather than through the USA Staffing interface?**

The following links allow you to navigate directly to Cognos. After following either the Stage or Production link below, a 'Select Namespace' box should appear on a page titled 'IBM Cognos Analytics.' Select 'opm.' You will then be taken to the USA Staffing login page where you can select 'Smart Card' to log in.

Stage: <https://data.stage.usastaffing.gov/ibmcognos/bi/>

Production: <https://data.usastaffing.gov/ibmcognos/bi/>