USA Hire Working Group Assessment Strategy Sessions: Parts 1-4

USA Hire℠

Transforming Government One Hire At A Time

November 2019 – September 2020
Created by the Office of Personnel Management, USA Hire Program Office

Assessment Strategy Sessions

Part 1: [Questions and Considerations](#)

Part 2: [Types of Assessments](#)

Part 3: [The Whole Person Approach](#)

Part 4: [Assessment Approaches for Common Hiring Considerations](#)

Assessment Strategy

Presenter: Michael Blair, Lead Personnel Research Psychologist, AEB

- First of a series of sessions on assessment strategy

- Today

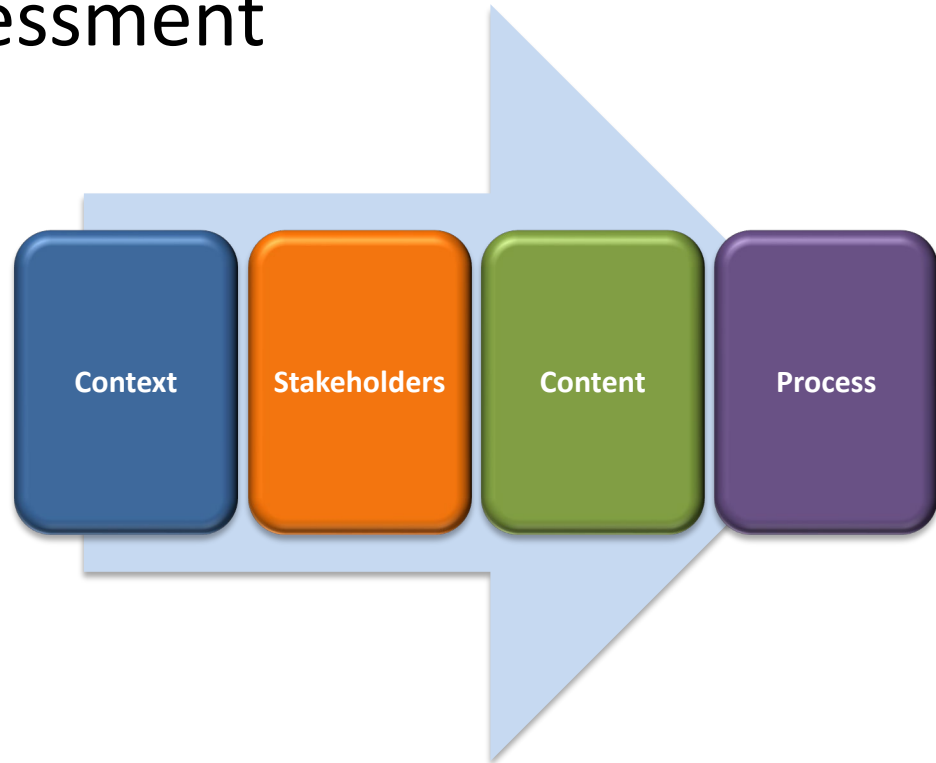 - Developing Your Assessment Strategy Part 1: Questions and Considerations

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[USA Hire Working Group Session Recording](#) - November 2019

- Defining Assessment

- Context

- Stakeholders

- Content

- Process

Context | Stakeholders | Content | Process

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Defining Assessment

- Assessment
  - A systematic approach to gathering information about individuals
  - Used to make selection, promotion, or other career-related decisions

- Assessment Tool
  - Any procedure used to measure an individual's employment or career-related qualifications and interests
  - Includes objective, subjective, and projective measures

- Assessment Strategy
  - Plan for designing and implementing one or more assessment tools for an organization, occupation, or a specific situation

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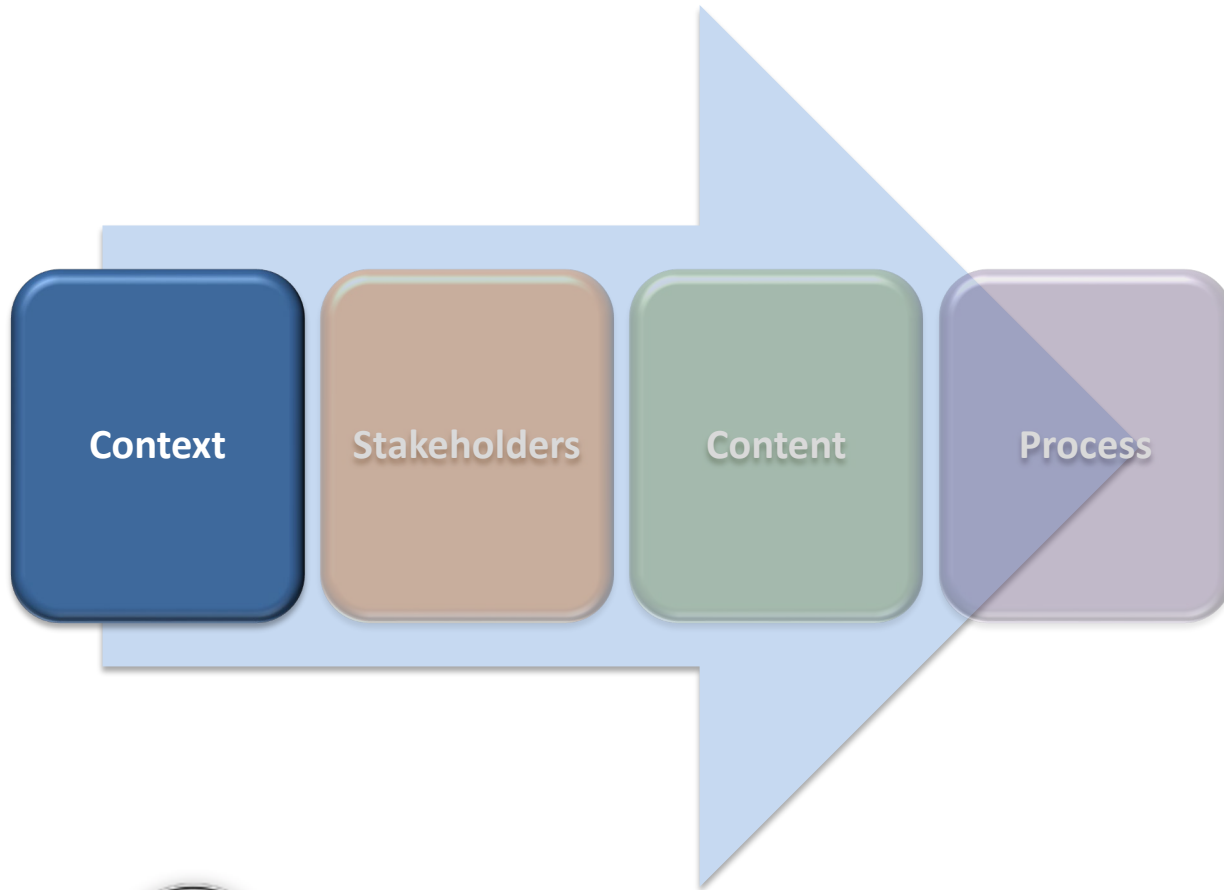*Transforming Government One Hire At A Time*

Defining Good Assessment

- Reliability
  - How well an assessment measures a characteristic
  - Produces dependable, repeatable, and consistent information
  - Reliability ranges from 0 to 1
  - *What is a "good" reliability coefficient?*

- Validity
  - What is measured and how well it is measured
  - Degree to which an assessment accurately predicts an outcome
  - Validity ranges from 0 to 1
  - *What is a "good" validity coefficient?*

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Context   Stakeholders   Content   Process

Context
The Federal Landscape

- Delegated examining

- Merit promotion

- Direct hire authority

- The time vs quality conundrum

Context
Barriers to Effective Assessment

- Minimal assessment knowledge/expertise

- Lack of collaboration among key players

- Constraints on time and/or resources

- Misperception/confusion on policies and procedures

- Availability of meaningful and/or useful data to support assessment development

- System limitations or constraints

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"Simple" Context Questions

- What process was used previously and was it effective?

- How many job openings are expected?

- How many applicants are expected per opening?

- Is the job general or specialized in nature?

- What is the level of the job?

- Is this a hard to fill position, and if so, why?

- What are the characteristics of the applicant pool?

- What resources (people, time money) are available?

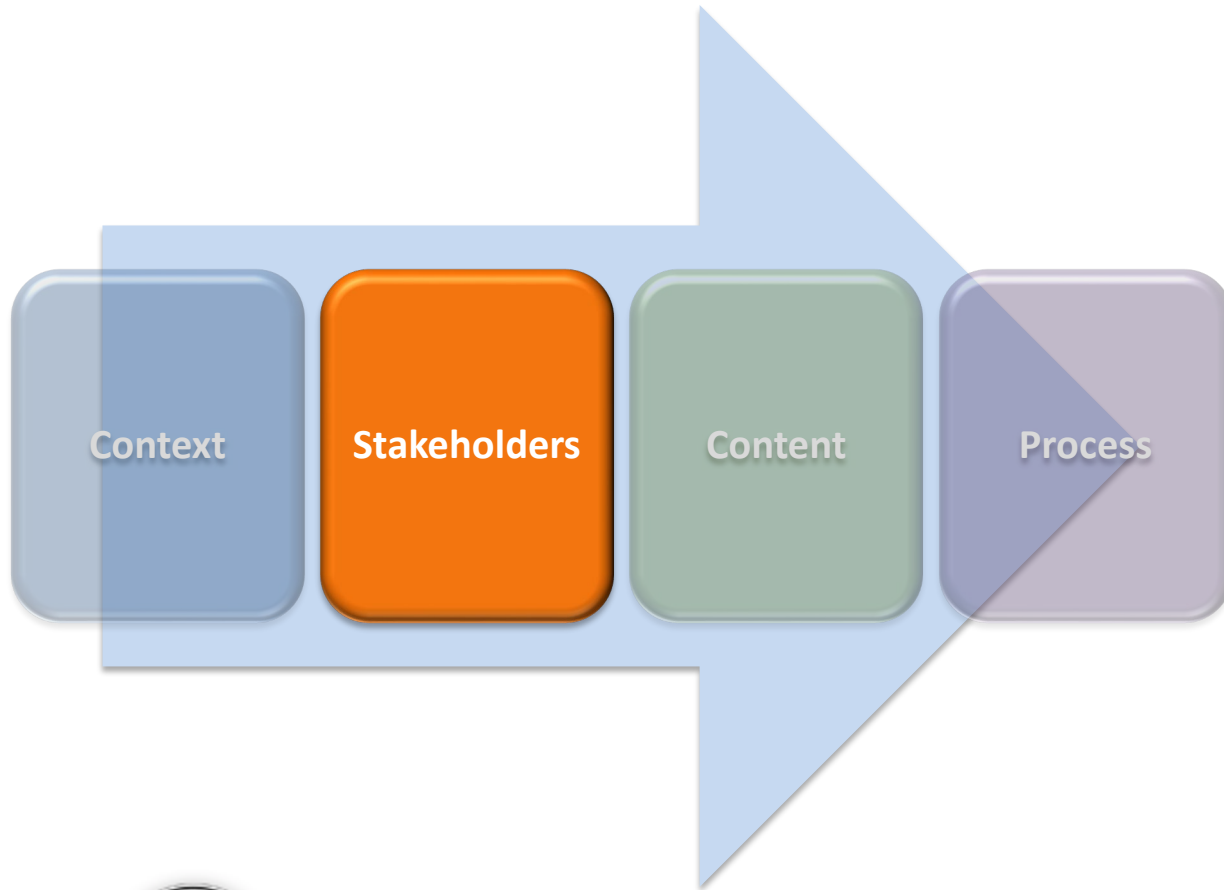**USA Hire**℠
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"Complex" Context Questions

- What other factors do we need to consider in filling this position?
  - Satisfaction with previous applicants and hires
  - Cost of a hiring error
  - Union involvement
  - Litigation history / potential
  - Turnover / retention

- Does your agency support the use of assessments?
  - Advocates
  - Detractors

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Context | Stakeholders | Content | Process

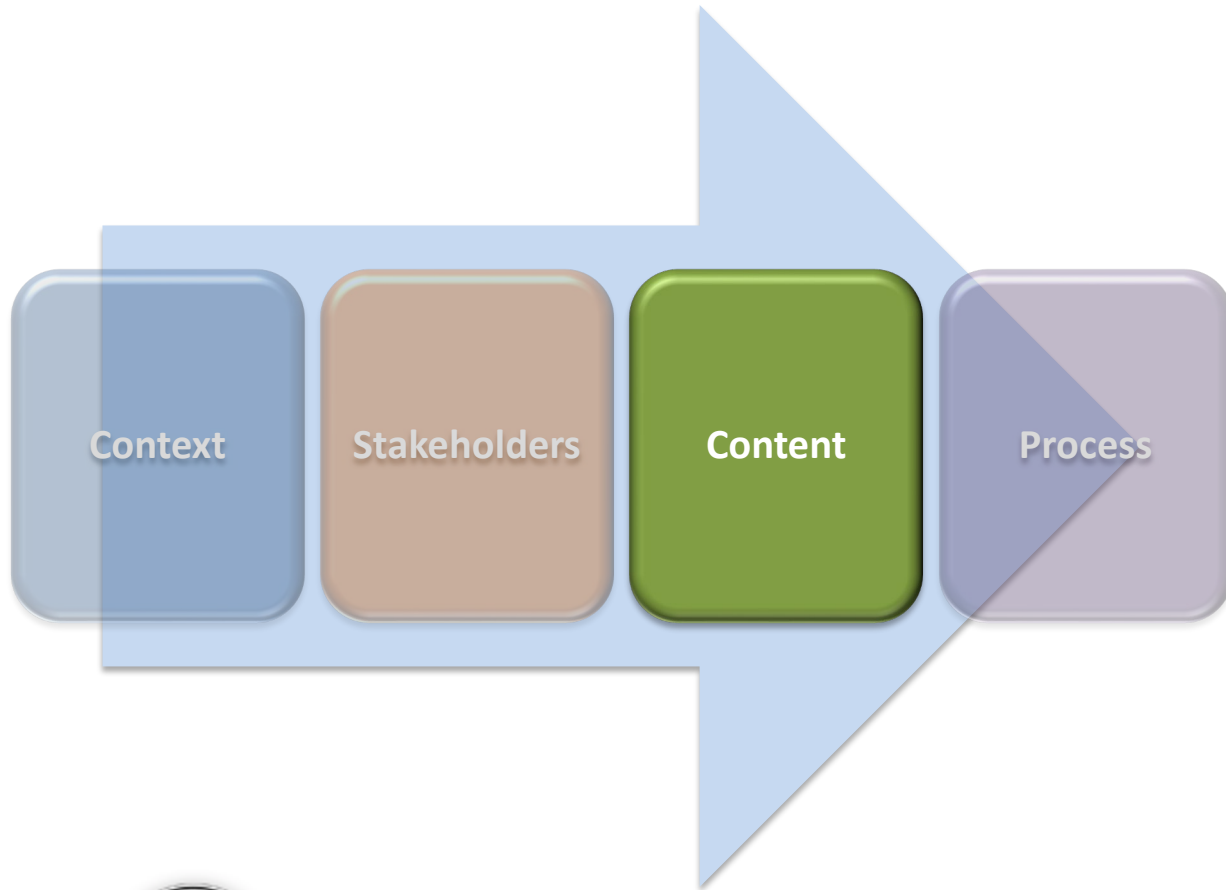USA Hire℠
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Stakeholders

- Agency Leadership

- Hiring Managers

- HR Personnel

- Job Applicants

Primary stakeholders

- Subject Matter Experts

- Personnel Psychologists

- Information Technology Staff

- Tax Payers

Secondary stakeholders

The key with stakeholders is to understand who they are, their individual perspectives, and which ones are most important for your assessment situation.

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Context | Stakeholders | **Content** | Process

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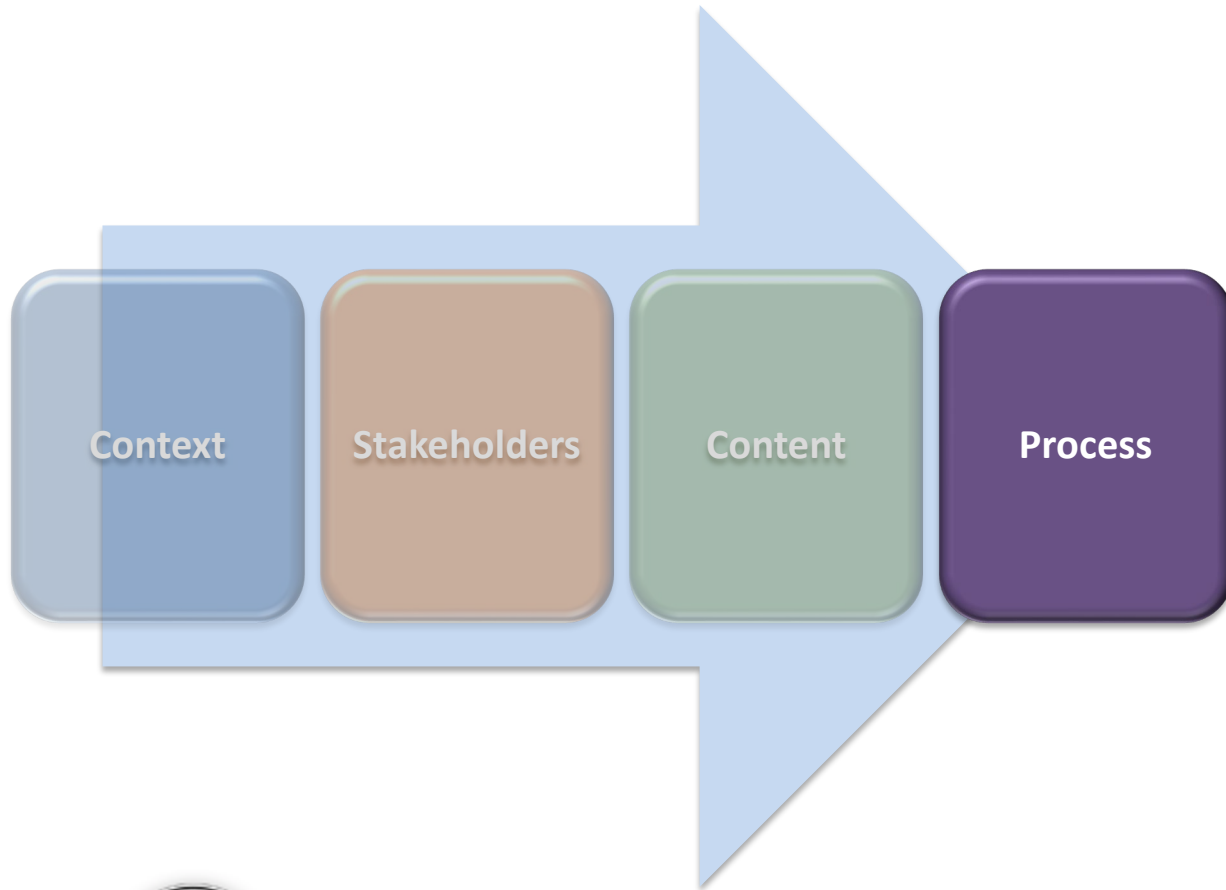Transforming Government One Hire At A Time

Content Questions

- What is the intended purpose of the assessment?

- Has a job analysis been conducted?

- Has the job changed significantly since the last job analysis?

- What are the critical competencies?

- What competencies are required at entry?

- What competencies do you want to measure and why?

- How is success measured on the job?

- How will success be measured for the assessment?

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Context → Stakeholders → Content → Process

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Process Questions

- How will the assessments be delivered?

- What assessment approach will be used?

- What is the assessment administration order?

- How will the assessments be scored?

- Have you evaluated each assessment option for:

  – Reliability and validity?

  – Competencies assessed?

  – Assessment double dipping or dichotomies?

  – Overall value relative to other options?

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Other Things to Consider

- Practicality / viability / feasibility of the assessment process
  - Sometimes less is better…
- What are you really trying to predict?
  - Retention, training success, job performance, hiring manager happiness…
- And the question that is most frequently forgotten, but may be the most important of all…
  - Do you really need an assessment?

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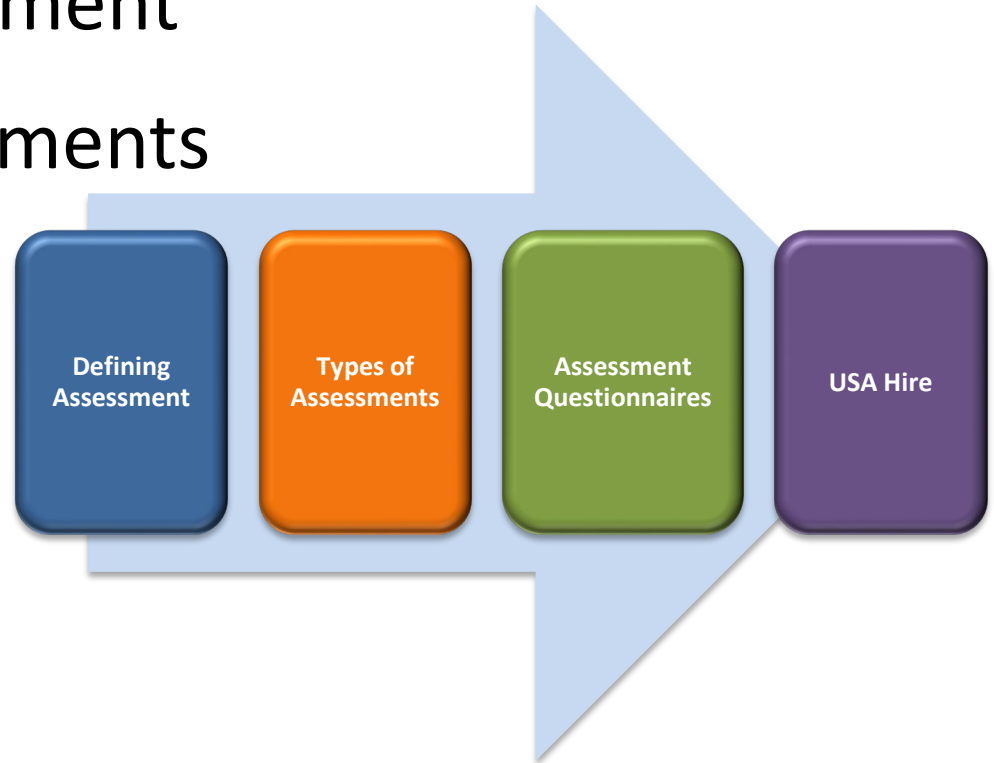 - Developing Your Assessment Strategy Part 2: Types of Assessments

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USA Hire Working Group Session Recording - January 2020

- Defining Assessment

- Types of Assessments

- AQs:
  - A focused look

- USA Hire
  - A focused look

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Defining Assessment

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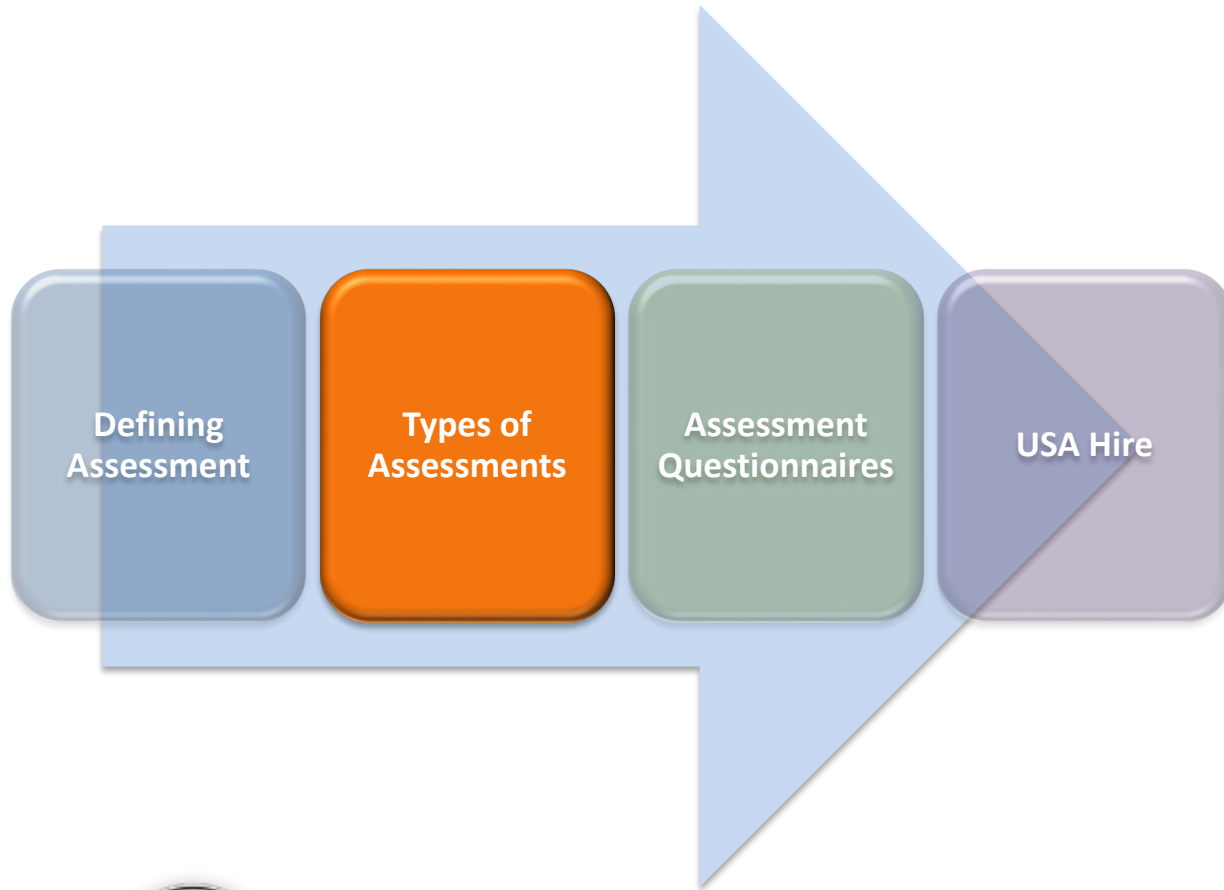*Transforming Government One Hire At A Time*

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Defining Assessment → Types of Assessments → Assessment Questionnaires → USA Hire

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Types of Assessments

- Assessment Questionnaires
  - Task- and/or competency-based self-report questionnaire used to screen and rank applicants based on their job-related training and experience

- Job Knowledge or Technical Skills Tests
  - Evaluate job knowledge, technical skills, or professional expertise in job specific competency areas

- Cognitive Ability Tests
  - Assess abilities involved in thinking (e.g., reasoning, memory, verbal and mathematical ability, problem solving)

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Types of Assessments

- Situational Judgment Tests
  - Assess decision making and other competencies by presenting applicants with a job-related problem or situation and asking them to identify their most and least likely courses of action

- Non-Cognitive and Biographical Assessments
  - Assess personality attributes, attitudes, experiences, interests, skills, and abilities validated as predictors of overall performance for a given occupation

- Work Sample Assessments
  - Evaluate an applicant's ability to perform tasks or work activities that mirror the tasks employees perform on the job

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Types of Assessments

- Assessment Centers
  - Assess multiple competencies by requiring applicants to complete a series of exercises that simulate situations, problems and tasks from the job

- Writing Assessments
  - Writing skills tests focus on general aspects such as grammar and communicating information in a succinct and organized manner
  - Work sample writing tests require applicants to produce writing samples that are similar to those produced on the job

- Structured Interview Assessments
  - Require applicants to respond to a set of standardized questions, linked to a job-relevant competencies, in which rating scales and benchmarks provide consistent guidelines for scoring

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Validity of Common Assessment Types

Assessment Type	Validity
Work sample	.54
Cognitive ability	.51
Structured Interviews	.51
Job knowledge / technical skills	.48
Assessment centers	.37
Non-cognitive / biographical	.35
Situational judgement	.34
Assessment questionnaires	.10 to .30[*]

[*]Estimate based on similar types of assessments (e.g., training & experience questionnaires, education, years on the job)

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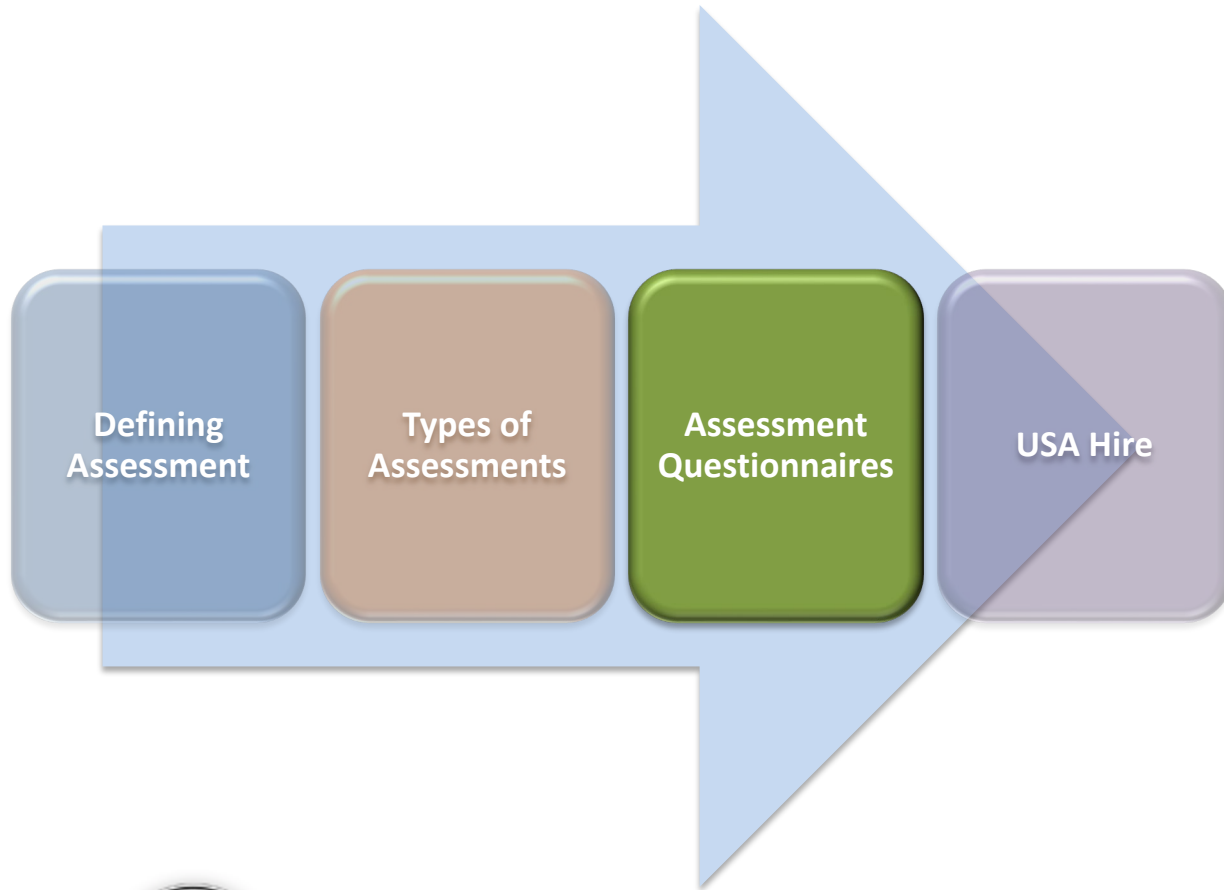Transforming Government One Hire At A Time

Incremental Validity

- *"The improvement obtained by adding a particular procedure or technique to an existing combination of assessment methods"* American Psychological Association
  - Incremental validity reflects the value of combining assessments to meet your hiring needs

- Two key concepts about incremental validity
  1. It is not an additive relationship. Adding a non-cognitive test to a cognitive test results in a validity of about .60, not .86
  2. "Need" is key to understanding the value of incremental validity
     - If the need is to hire quickly, the incremental validity may be different than if the need is to hire top performers

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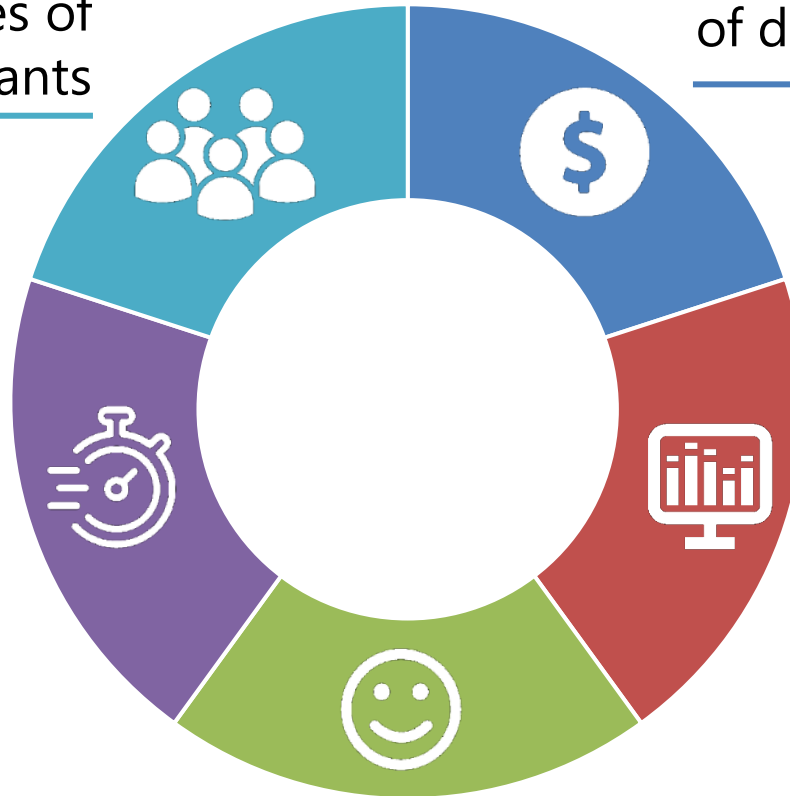Transforming Government One Hire At A Time

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Benefits of Assessment Questionnaires

Easily administered to large volumes of applicants

Low cost & ease of development

Speed to fill positions

Range of competencies assessed

Applicant acceptance

AQ Challenges & Considerations

- Applicant response inflation

- Lower validity compared to many other assessment tools

- Potential for lack of meaningful distinction among candidates

- Less suitable for entry-level and unspecialized positions

- Development time and subject matter expert (SME) involvement required to increase validity and usefulness

- Not recommended as the only assessment tool

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AQ Recommended Best Practices

Begin with a quality job analysis

Craft high impact questions that differentiate among applicants

Involve subject matter experts in the development and review process

Follow a competency-based approach

Develop specific, observable, behavioral, and verifiable items using the item writing formula: Action Verb + Direct Object + Qualifying Statement

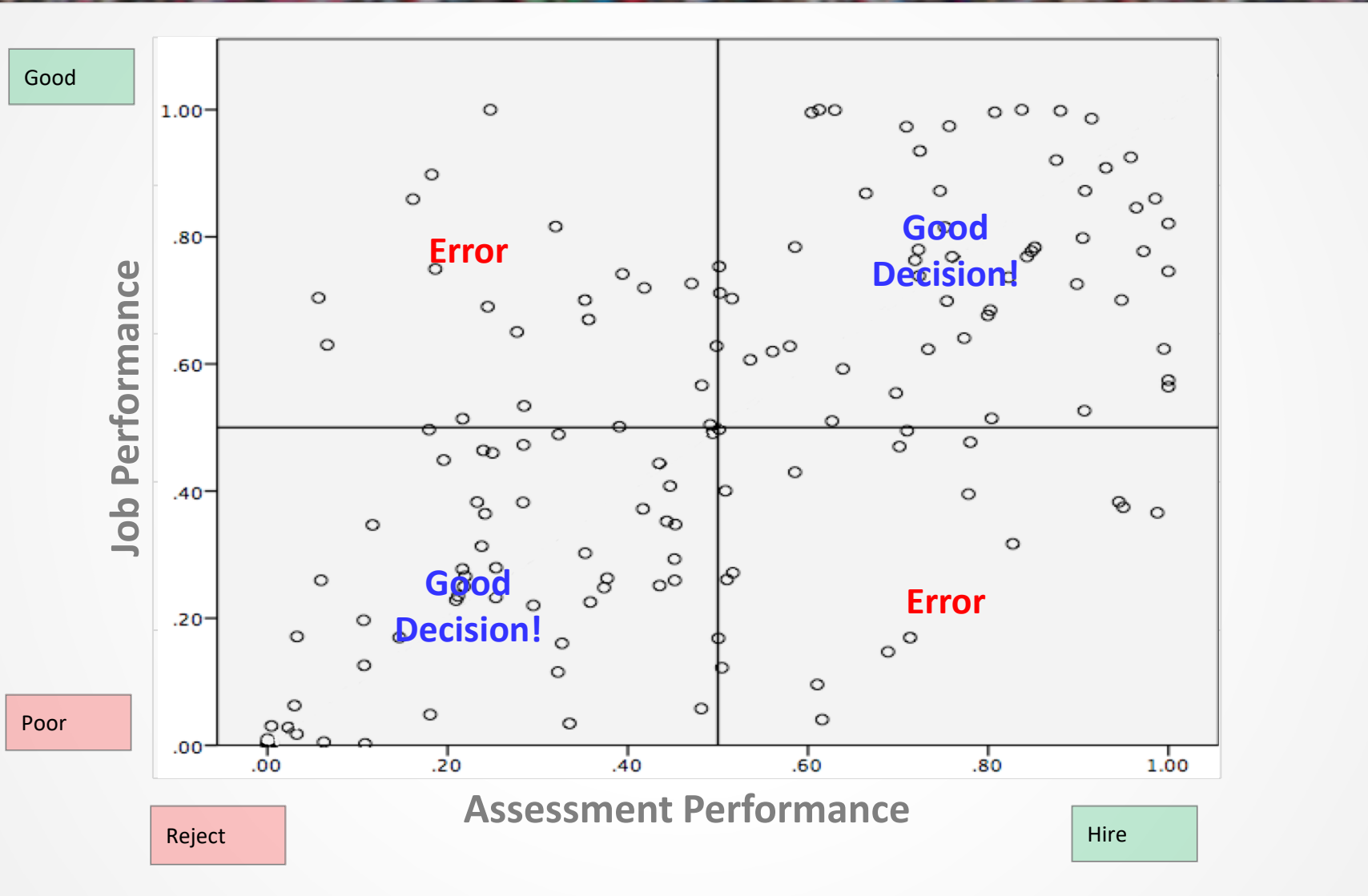Identify or create a rating scale that is appropriate for the item
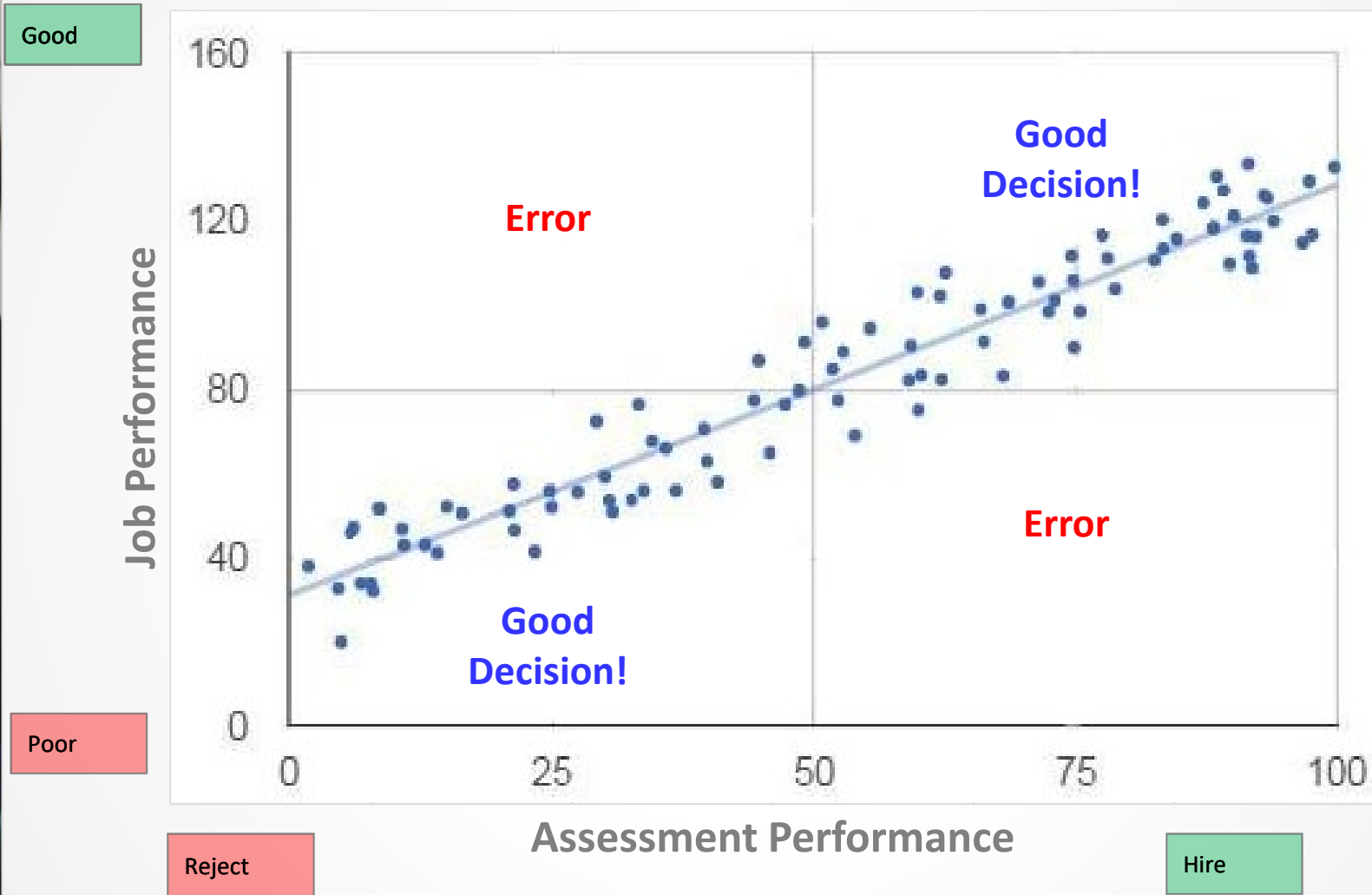
Identify methods to mitigate applicant inflation

Combine with another appropriate assessment

Defining Assessment → Types of Assessments → Assessment Questionnaires → USA Hire
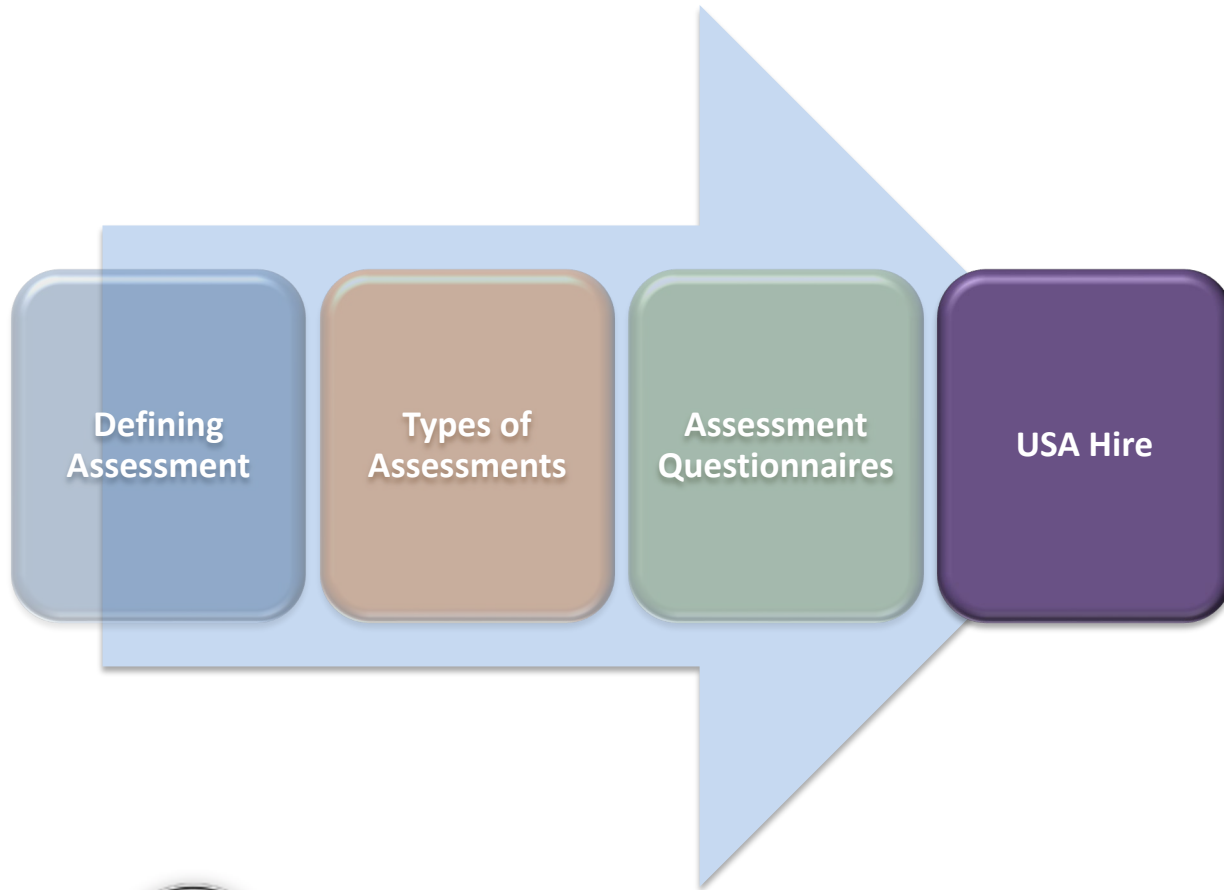
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USA Hire

Access Quality Online Assessments

Standard	Premium	Custom
✓ 118 job series ✓ General competencies ✓ Off the shelf ✓ Specific to series/grade	✓ Writing ✓ Supervisory/Executive ✓ Project management ✓ 1801/1802 Job Series	✓ Agency-specific ✓ Mission critical ✓ New content

- USA Hire assessments are competency-based and designed to measure critical general competencies a person needs to have at the time of hire to perform the job successfully
- USA Hire Standard assessment batteries are composed of a combination of cognitive ability tests, non-cognitive / biographical tests, and situational judgement tests
- USA Hire premium assessments include work sample tests, non-cognitive / biographical tests, and situational judgement tests
- USA Custom assessments can be tailored to the needs of the agency and position

Standard USA Hire includes cut scores for 12 series - applicants must achieve a minimum level of proficiency to move forward in the process

USA Hire has assessed 1,000,000+ applicants for over 12,000 job announcements since 2011

Benefits of USA Hire

Easily administered to large volumes of applicants

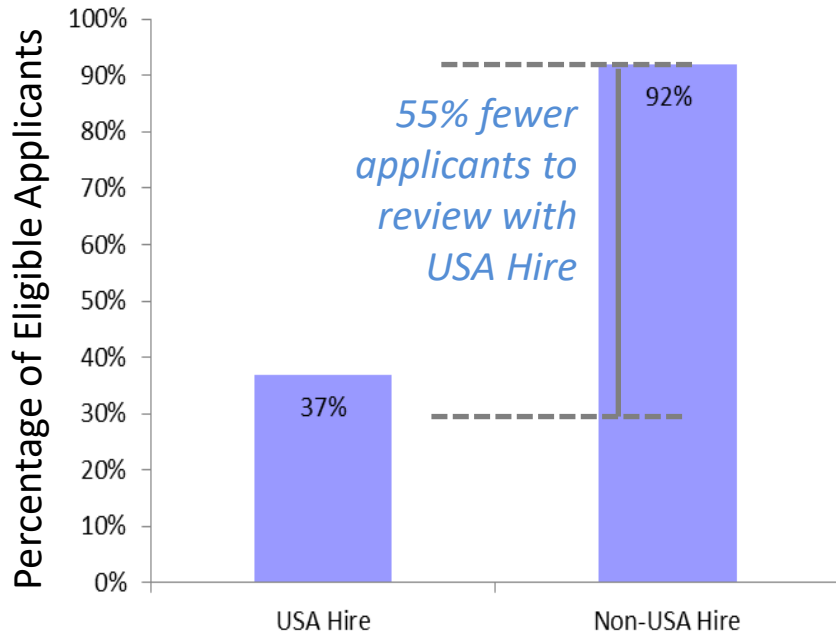Ease of deployment with moderate cost

Range of general competencies assessed

Applicant satisfaction

Quality & speed of hire
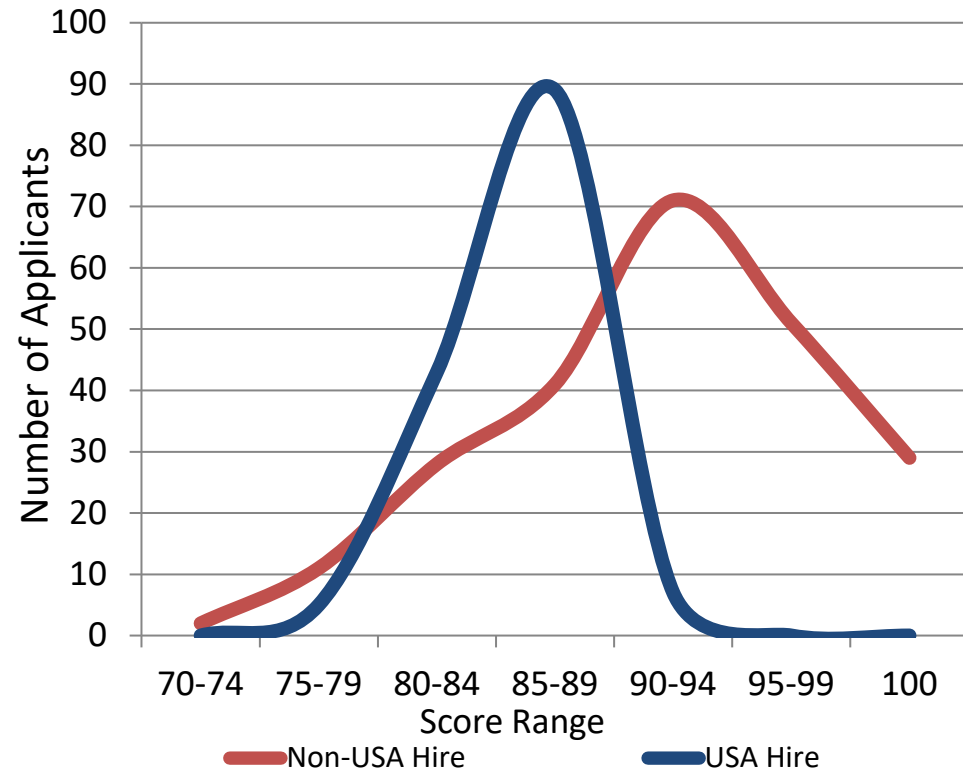
Case Study: USA Hire vs. Non USA Hire

% Eligible and Best Qualified After USA Hire/Non-USA Hire Assessment

55% fewer applicants to review with USA Hire

Findings: USA Hire results in significantly fewer applicants for HR review, **reducing the time required to review applicants by 10 hours.**

USA Hire/Non-USA Hire Score Distribution

USA Hire provides a **more 'normal' score distribution**, as opposed to the self-assessment, which tends to skew at the high end of the range.

USA Hire Challenges & Considerations

- Measures general competencies, not job-specific and/or technical competencies

- Requires first-time applicants to complete a 1-2 hour assessment battery (USA Hire Standard)

- Cut scores are not available for all series (USA Hire Standard)

- Potentially less suitable for hard to fill positions, low volume JOAs, and highly specialized positions

- Not recommended as the only assessment tool

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USA Hire Recommended Best Practices

Begin with a quality job analysis and follow a competency-based approach

Understand the area of consideration - DE, Merit Promotion, Direct Hire etc. - and the potential impact (e.g., applicant pool, bargaining unit)

Consider the end goal and the incremental value an assessment will provide

Combine with another appropriate assessment (e.g., technical skill measure)

Determine if the position is supervisory or non-supervisory and use the appropriate assessment (USA Hire Standard is for non-supervisory only)

Consider the expected applicant pool in the decision process to use USA Hire

Be aware of whether a cut score is used for the USA Hire assessment

Determine the weighting for each of the assessments

Assessment Strategy

Presenter: Michael Blair, Lead Personnel Research Psychologist, AEB

- Third in a series of sessions on assessment strategy

- Today

  - Developing Your Assessment Strategy Part 3: The Whole Person Approach
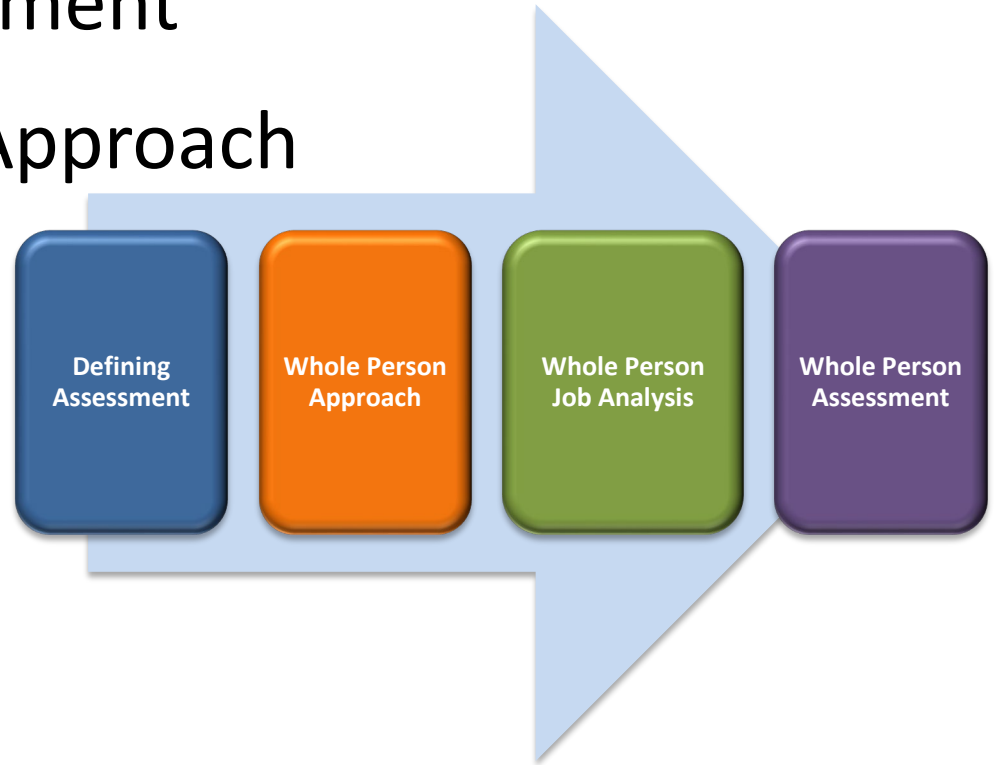
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[USA Hire Working Group Session Recording](#) - June 2020

- Defining Assessment

- Whole Person Approach

- Whole Person Job Analysis
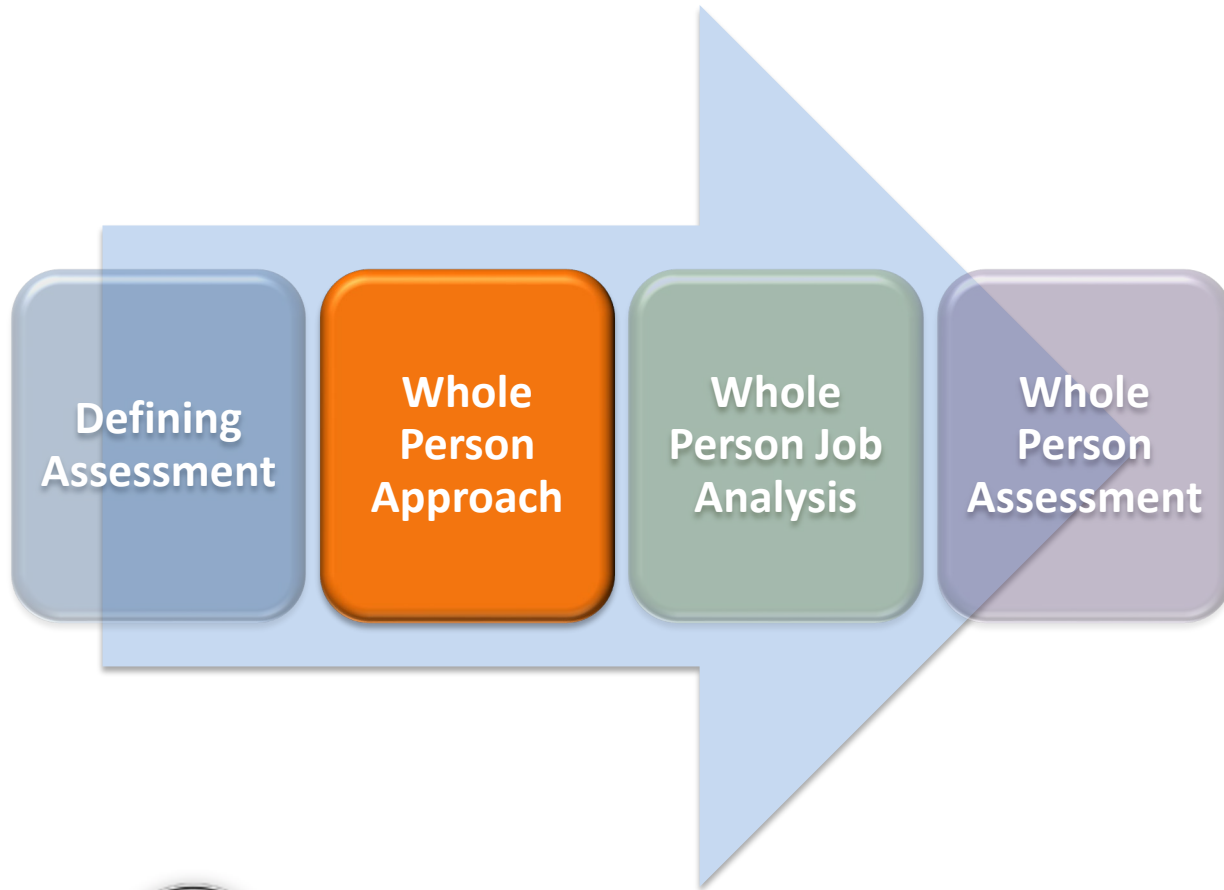
- Whole Person Assessment

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Defining Assessment → Whole Person Approach → Whole Person Job Analysis → Whole Person Assessment

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Whole Person Approach

- Measure as much of the whole person as practically possible

Practical Skills

Cognitive Skills

Technical Skills

Interpersonal Skills

Communication Skills

Experience & Training

Whole Person Approach & Job Performance

Predicting Job Performance
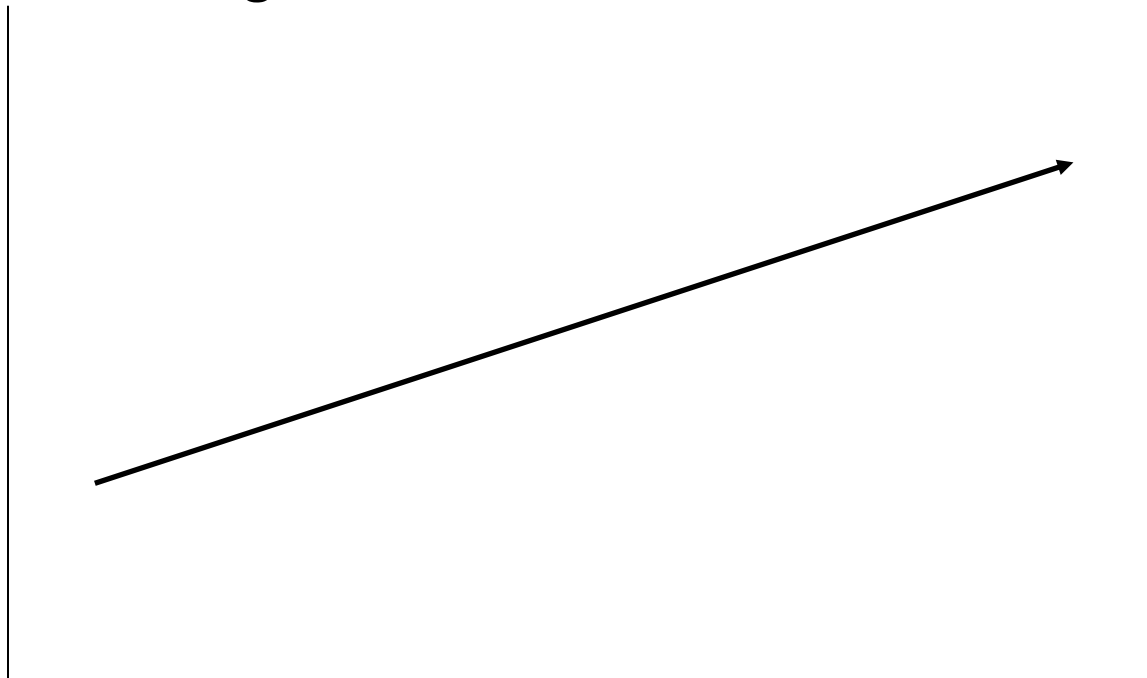
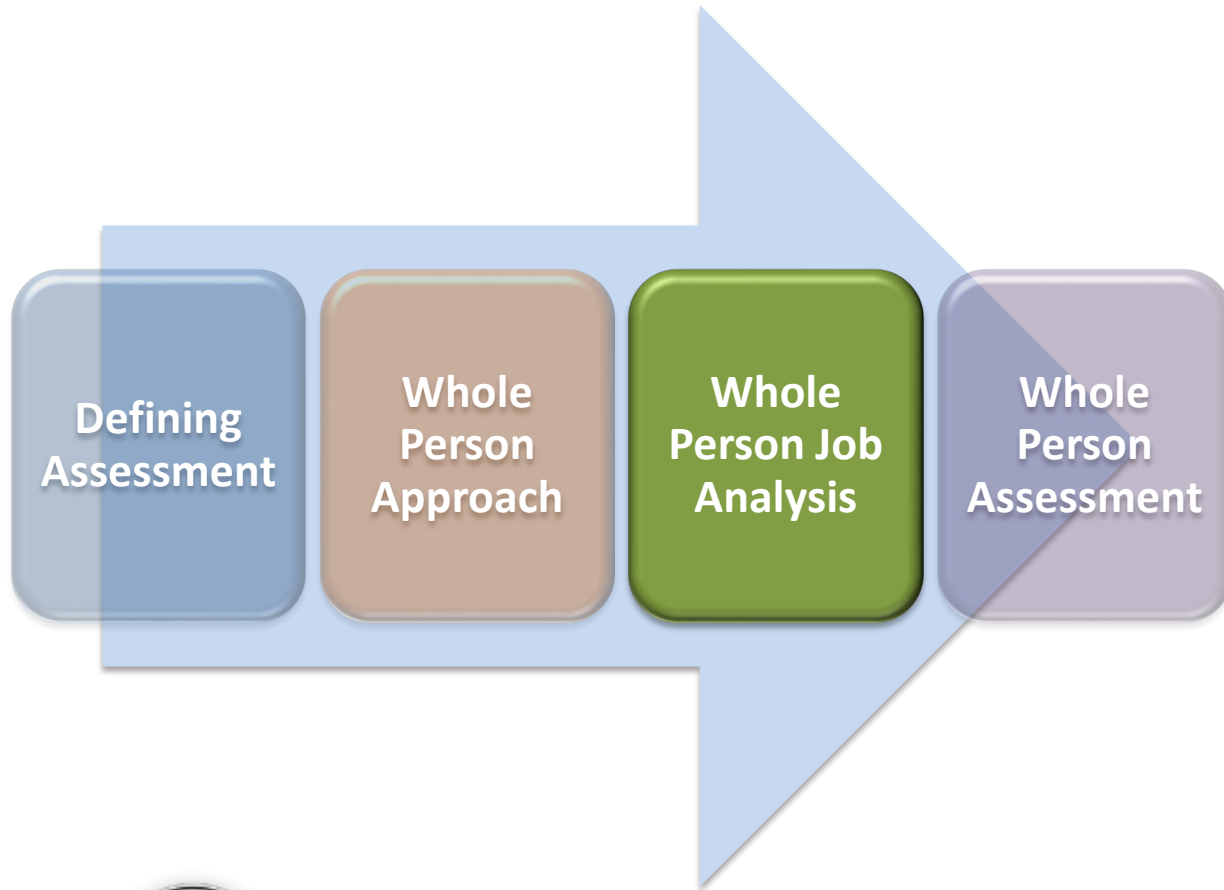Cognitive   Cognitive + Practical   Cognitive + Practical + Interpersonal   Cognitive + Practical + Interpersonal + Technical

Partial Person Approach

"As you can see, I am nothing like that person in my resume."

Defining Assessment → Whole Person Approach → Whole Person Job Analysis → Whole Person Assessment
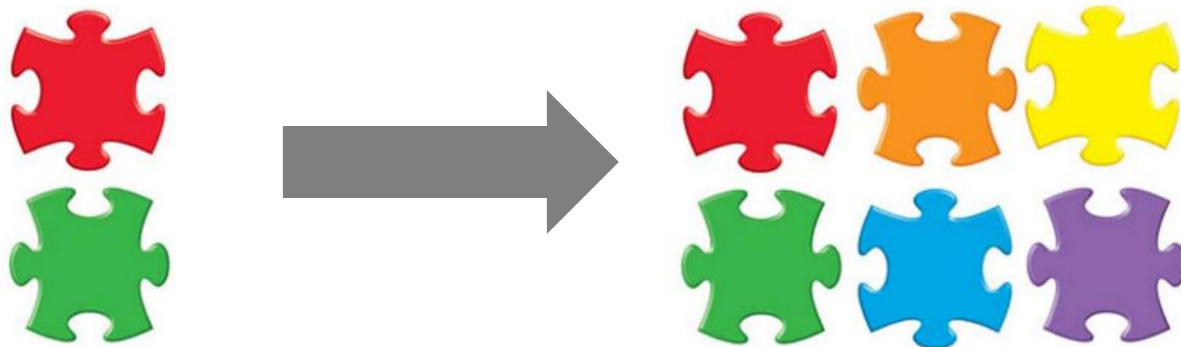
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Whole Person Job Analysis

- Consider the broad domain of the job

- Identify as many of the key competencies making up this broad domain

Benefits of a Whole Person Job analysis

- Allows you to consider the full competency range

- Allows you to make better assessment decisions

- Provides insight into your weighting strategy

- Results in a more diverse pool of applicants

- Results in higher validity (better job performance)

- Increases the ROI of your hiring process

Conducting a Whole Person Job Analysis

- Ask questions about competency categories
- If you're using USA Hire, general competencies have been covered
  - Focus on other key aspects of the job
    - Technical competencies
    - Job specific competencies
    - Job knowledge
    - Communication
- Not sure where to start, call your friendly personnel research psychologist!
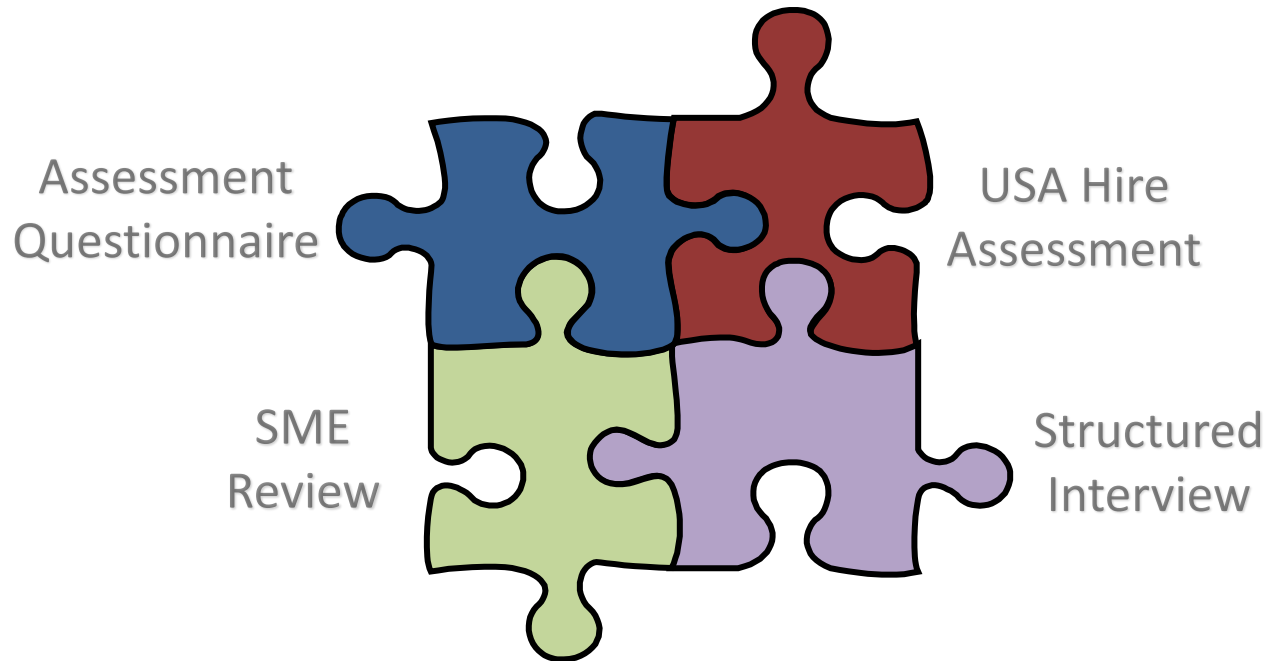
Defining Assessment → Whole Person Approach → Whole Person Job Analysis → Whole Person Assessment
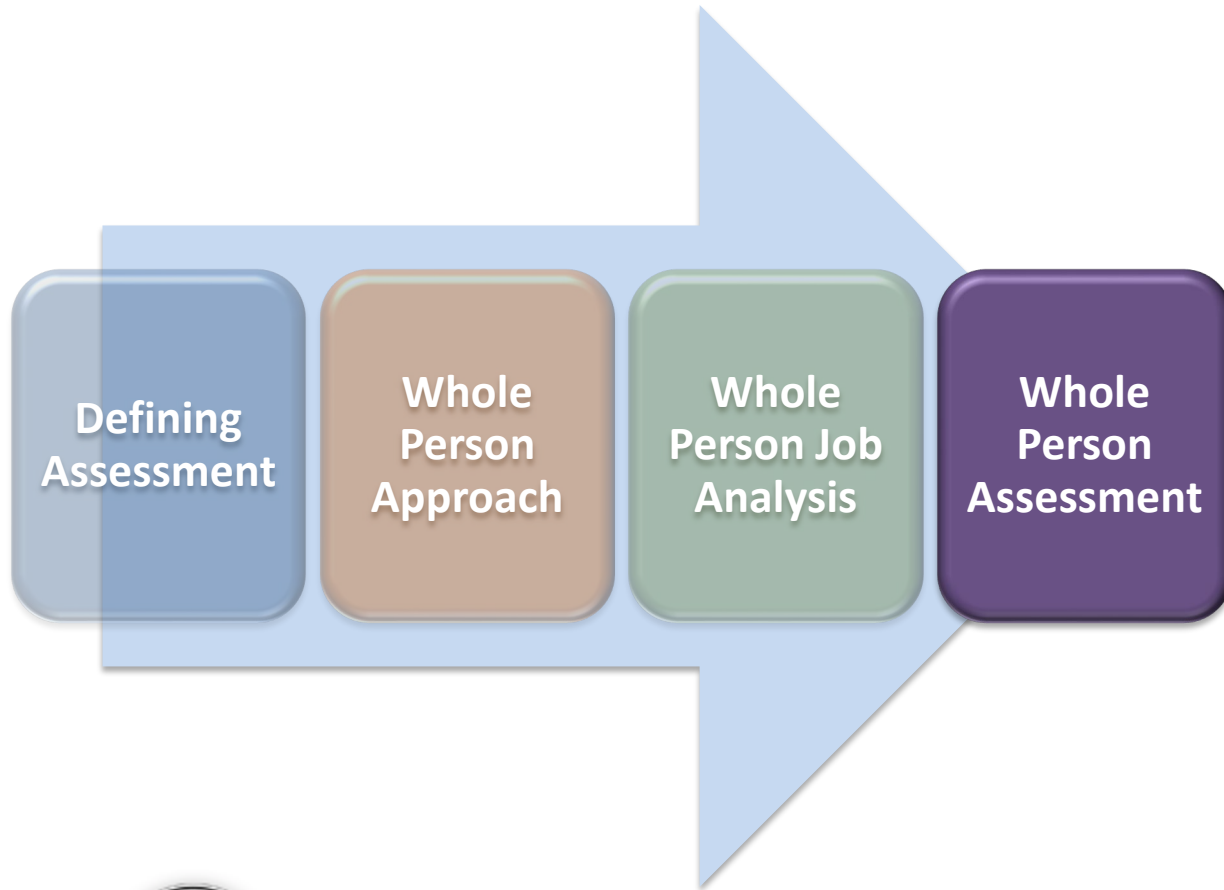
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Whole Person Assessment

- To accurately assess the whole person, you need to use a **palette of assessments**

Assessment Questionnaire

USA Hire Assessment

SME Review

Structured Interview

Building Whole Person Assessments

Step 1:
Identify Key Competencies

Step 2:
Select Relevant Tests

Competencies

		Test A	Test B	Test C	Test D
Attention to Detail	Moderate	■		■	
Customer Service	Low				
Decision Making	Moderate		■		
Integrity/Honesty	High	■			■
Mathematical Reasoning	Low				
Project Management	High		■	■	
Reasoning	Moderate		■	■	
Resilience	Low				

Whole Person Assessment & Job Performance

Predictive Value

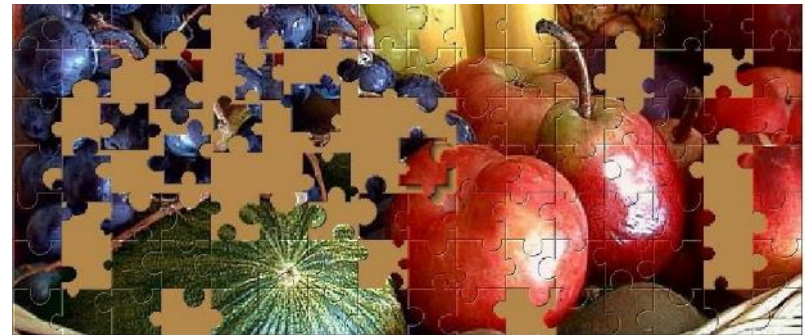|			
Test B	Test B + Test A	Test B + Test A + Test D	Test B + Test A + Test D + Test C
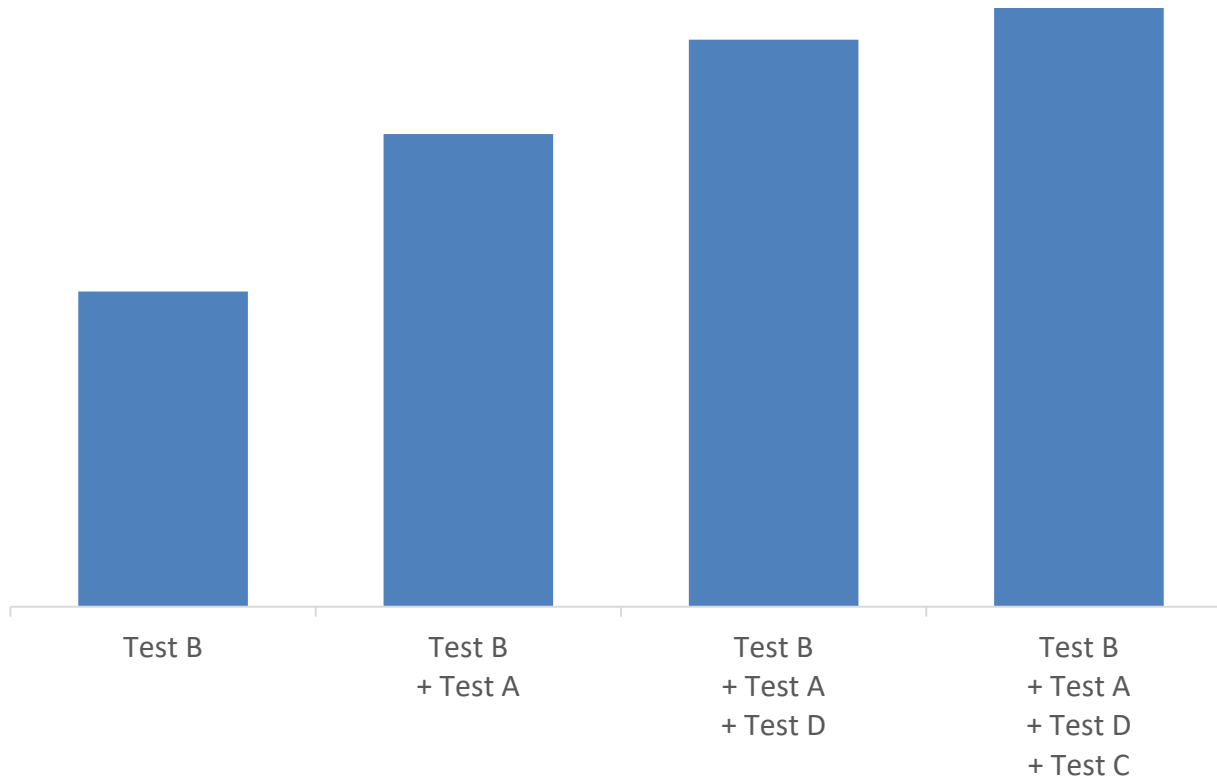
The Goal of Whole Person Assessment

- We are not trying to measure everything
- The goal is to complete enough of the puzzle to make a sound and effective decision

From here   To here

Partial Person Assessment

Whole Person Assessment

Assessment Strategy

Presenter: Michael Blair, Lead Personnel Research Psychologist, AEB

- Fourth in a series of sessions on assessment strategy

- Today

  - Developing Your Assessment Strategy Part 4: Assessment Approaches for Common Hiring Situations

USA Hire Working Group Session Recording - September 2020

- Defining Assessment

- Common Hiring Authorities

- Unique Hiring Authorities

- Other Hiring Situations

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A Note About Today's Session

- Addresses common (and sometimes not so common) hiring situations and potential assessment strategies for these situations

- Focus is on providing examples of assessments readily available and/or often used in the Federal government

- Your assessment strategy should drive assessment choice

- When in doubt, ask your friendly Personnel (Research) Psychologist for assistance!

Defining Assessment

Common Hiring Authorities

Unique Hiring Authorities

Other Hiring Situations
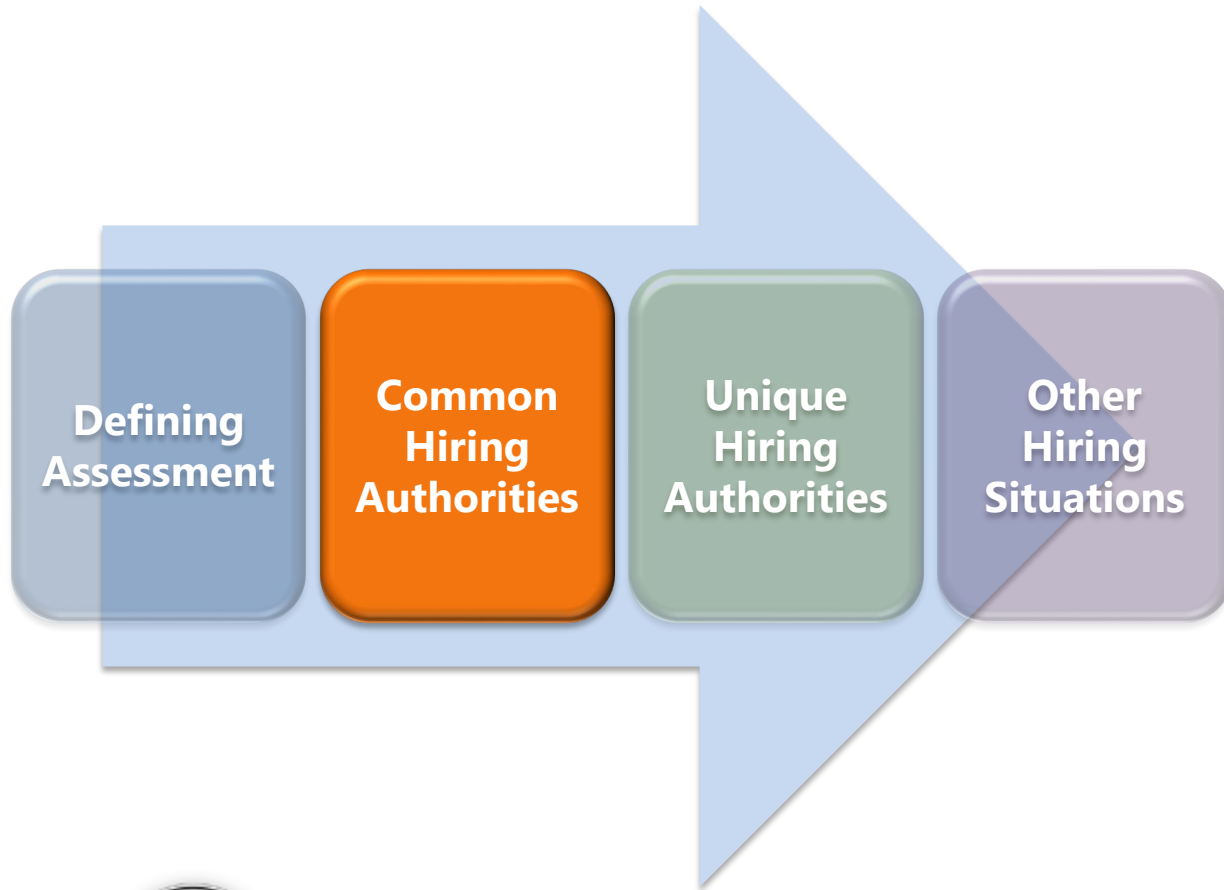
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Common Hiring Authorities
Delegated Examining

- In a typical Delegated Examining scenario, we know little about the applicants
  - A palette of assessments is usually the best strategy
  - USA Hire belongs in your palette
- Entry-level, no technical competencies
  - USA Hire Standard and/or Automated Writing Assessment
- Mid-level, some technical competencies required
  - AQ, USA Hire Standard or Premium, Resume, Structured Interview
- Senior-level, technical competencies differentiate
  - AQ, USA Hire Premium or Custom, SME-Based Process, Structured Interview

Common Hiring Authorities
Merit Promotion - Government Wide
### Return to Delegated Examining

Common Hiring Authorities
Merit Promotion - Internal

- Internal merit promotion comes in two broad flavors:
  - Limited to a specific group (e.g., department, division)
  - Open to all within the agency
- Limited Merit Promotion or smaller agencies
  - AQ, SME-Based Process, Structured Interview
  - USA Hire may be beneficial if general competencies differentiate
- Agency-wide Merit Promotion for large agencies
  - Return to Delegated Examining
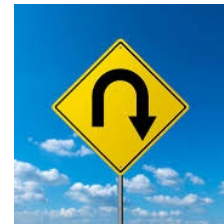
Common Hiring Authorities
Direct Hire

- Myth
  - Assessments cannot be used with Direct Hire Authorities (DHAs)
- Truth
  - Rarely do DHAs limit the use of assessments
  - You still need an assessment strategy for most DH scenarios
- When using DH to speed up the hiring process
  - AQ and USA Hire Standard or Premium can facilitate the process
  - When minimum proficiency is critical, cut scores can be effective
- When using DH to address hard to fill, specialized roles
  - AQ, SME-Based Process, Structured Interview

Defining Assessment → Common Hiring Authorities → Unique Hiring Authorities → Other Hiring Situations

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Unique Hiring Authorities
Pathways Program

- Student Intern, no technical competencies required
  - USA Hire Standard (xx99), AWA, Structured Interview
- Student Intern, some technical competencies required
  - USA Hire Standard (xx99), SME Process, Structured Interview
- Recent graduate, no technical competencies required
  - USA Hire Standard (series specific), AWA, Structured Interview
- Recent graduate, some technical competencies required
  - AQ, USA Hire Standard (series specific), SME-Based process, SI
- Recent graduate, technical competencies differentiate
  - AQ, USA Hire Premium or Custom, SME-Based Process, Structured Interview

Unique Hiring Authorities
Veterans Preference and ICTAP/CTAP

- Myth
  - Assessments add no to little value when veterans preference, ICTAP/CTAP, or other preference-based hiring approaches are in place

- Truth
  - When used appropriately, assessments help to ensure a qualified individual is hired under preference-based approaches

- Preference applies to applicants who are qualified
  - A combination of assessments measuring the required general competencies (USA Hire) and technical competencies (AQ, SME Process, Structured Interview) help identify qualified applicants
  - Cut scores can be used to ensure minimum level of proficiency

Defining Assessment → Common Hiring Authorities → Unique Hiring Authorities → Other Hiring Situations

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Other Hiring Situations
## **Supervisory Positions**

- Making an effective supervisory or managerial level hire is critical to the long-term success of the organization

- A common mistake is hiring for technical competence, rather than leadership competence

- USA Hire offers 3 selection-focused leadership assessments
  - Federal Supervisor Assessment (off-the-shelf)
  - Supervisory Situational Judgement Test (tailored)
  - Executive Assessment suite (pick and choose)

- <u>One</u> effective assessment strategy is to use an AQ, a USA Hire leadership assessment, and a structured interview

Other Hiring Situations
High Applicant Volume

- A well designed and well implemented assessment strategy can be your best friend in high volume applicant situations
  - Goal is to successfully manage the volume while identifying top applicants
- Well suited for multiple hurdles
  - Future USA Staffing capability
- AQ to address eligibility and technical aspects
- USA Hire is an effect tool
  - Reduces casual appliers
  - Cut scores ensure minimum proficiency
  - Effectively differentiates among applicants
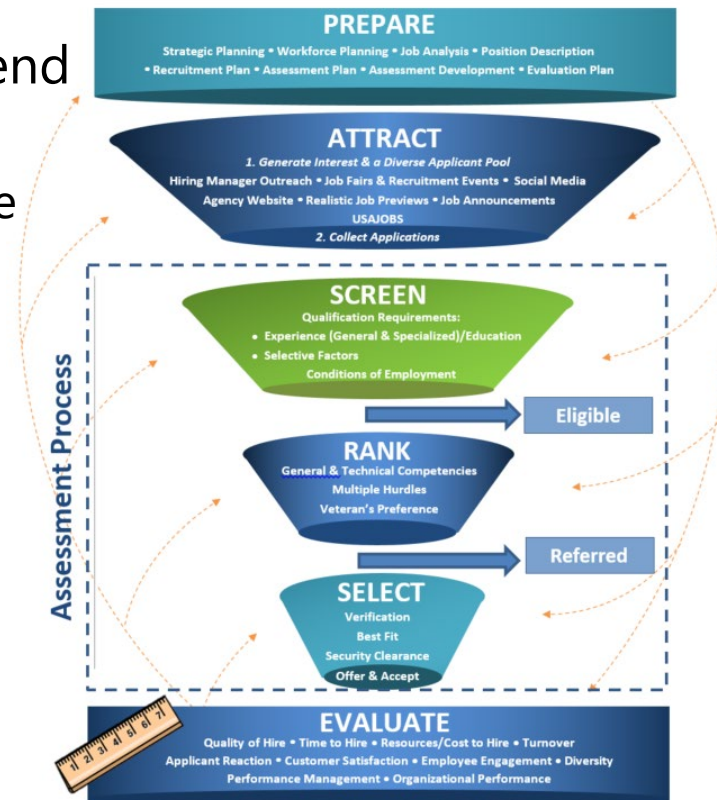
Other Hiring Situations
Low Applicant Volume

- Myth
  - Assessments should not be used in low applicant volume situations

- Truth
  - Assessments may be even more important in low applicant situations

- A sound assessment strategy is critical
  - Avoid "panic" or "warm body" hiring
  - Critical competencies are still required for job success
  - Resume review, SME-Based Process, Structured Interview
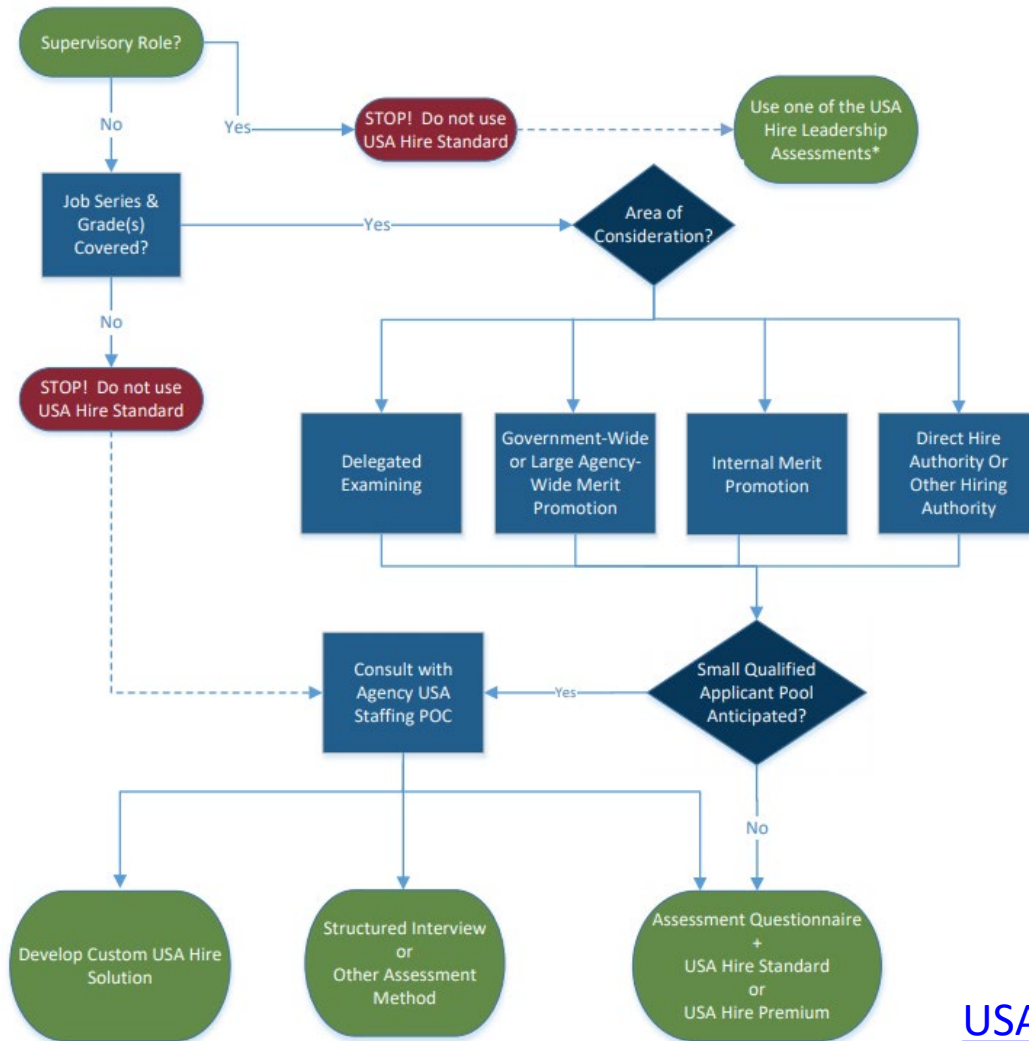
Other Hiring Situations
Hard to Fill Positions

Return to Low Applicant Volume

USA Hire Decision Tree

*Contact Agency USA Staffing POC concerning Leadership Assessments

USA Hire Decision Tree

Thank

You