



# USA Hire Standard Assessments

## TRANSFORMING GOVERNMENT ONE HIRE AT A TIME

### USA Hire Frequently Asked Questions



**USA Hire<sup>SM</sup>**  
*Transforming Government One Hire At A Time*

**PROPRIETARY INFORMATION** THESE MATERIALS MAY BE PHOTOCOPIED FOR USE IN EVALUATING THE ASSESSMENT SOLUTIONS BUT ARE NOT TO BE SHARED WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS, CONSULTANTS, OR VENDORS WITHOUT THE PRIOR CONSENT FROM OPM'S ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, HUMAN RESOURCES SOLUTIONS.

## **BACKGROUND**

This document contains Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) regarding USA Hire online assessments. It can be used by your agency to address stakeholder questions and to determine if USA Hire assessments are right for your recruitment needs. Additional information is available at the [USA Hire Resource Center](#). Your USA Staffing Account Manager is also available to assist you or direct your questions to the appropriate contact.

## **GENERAL QUESTIONS**

### **What is USA Hire?**

USA Hire is an OPM Human Resources Solutions program that offers Federal agencies online assessment solutions. Agencies can use USA Hire to automate agency assessment content, to develop new custom online assessments, or to implement USA Hire standard solutions.

USA Hire Standard Assessments are defined as unproctored USA Hire assessments that can be included in the USA Staffing assessment plan for a specific vacancy immediately by the HR user, with no additional analysis, development, validation, or customization required.

The assessments were developed through an OPM/vendor partnership. The competencies assessed were identified through a government wide occupational analysis. These occupational analysis results are the basis for the competencies included in the USA Hire test battery for a given occupation and grade level. Examples of the competencies measured by the assessments include Customer Service, Decision Making, Interpersonal Skills, Teamwork, Reasoning, Reading, Mathematical Reasoning, Attention to Detail, Flexibility, Influencing/Negotiating, Integrity/Honesty, Learning, Self-Management, Stress Tolerance, and Accountability.

Custom assessment projects include:

- Agency-specific standard assessments
- Validation that a current standard assessment applies to a different series at that agency;
- Development of new assessment content that is unique to a specific agency;
- Any proctored assessment;
- Any hurdled assessment process managed by USA Hire;
- Any agency testing or assessment material the agency would like hosted on the USA Hire platform; and
- Assessments OPM has chosen to exclude from the standard offering including the Supervisory Situational Judgment Test (SSJT) and the Project Management Simulation.

### **What is the FY16 cost for using USA Hire?**

USA Hire Standard Assessments are available to USA Staffing customer agencies that solely use USA Staffing as their Talent Acquisition System. Customer agencies with 19 or fewer full access USA Staffing system users pay a flat fee of \$7,875. Customer agencies with 20 or greater full access system users, pay

an additional 6% of the total cost of the USA Staffing IAA. Contact your USA Staffing Account Manager if your agency would like to purchase USA Hire Standard Assessments access.

Custom Assessment projects are not included in the standard assessments access fee. Costs for custom USA Hire assessments will be managed through an IAA separate from the agency's use of USA Hire Standard Assessments and use of the USA Staffing system. A separate agreement with OPM will be required to develop and administer custom assessments. Contact a USA Hire Solutions Manager at [USAHire@opm.gov](mailto:USAHire@opm.gov) if your agency would like to purchase USA Hire custom solutions.

### **If my agency purchases USA Hire, is it required to use the USA Hire assessments?**

Agencies have the discretion to use or not use the assessments on a vacancy by vacancy basis based on your job analysis and specific business needs.

### **Which occupations and grade levels are included in the USA Hire Standard Assessments?**

For a full list of available series, please reference the *USA Hire Standard Assessments Overview flyer* on the [USA Hire Resource Center](#). For a full list of available grades for each series, please contact your USA Staffing Account Manager.

### **Is there a possibility to include other occupations and grades in USA Hire?**

Yes. You may partner with OPM through an Interagency Agreement to expand USA Hire to incorporate additional occupational series and/or grades.

### **Will USA Hire be able to host agency-specific assessments?**

Yes. You may partner with OPM through an interagency agreement to host agency-owned assessments.

### **Can agencies use the assessments for both Competitive (i.e., Delegated Examining) and Merit Promotion announcements? What are the policy considerations in both scenarios?**

Yes. The USA Hire assessments may be used for delegated examining and merit promotion. Agencies should consider their merit promotion plans and Bargaining Unit Agreements when deciding whether or not to use USA Hire for Merit Promotion.

### **What competencies are assessed for each series and grade combination available through the USA Hire Standard Assessments?**

For a description of the assessment batteries used and competencies assessed for each series and grade combination available using the USA Hire Standard Assessments, please ask your USA Staffing Account Manager for a copy of the *USA Hire Standard Assessments Description and Matrix* document. NOTE: You are responsible for safeguarding the contents of this document.

### **May agencies view the USA Hire questions to understand the applicant experience?**

For test security purposes, agency participants will not have access to the USA Hire Standard Assessments for informational purposes. Sample items can be viewed through the [USA Hire Resource Center](#).

## **Is there additional information or research that identifies how these types of assessments are predictive of success?**

One of the most frequently cited resources for showing the predictive validity of various assessment types is the following article: Schmidt, F. L., & Hunter, J. E. (1998). The validity and utility of selection methods in personnel psychology: Practical and theoretical implications of 85 years of research findings. *Psychological Bulletin*, 124, 262-274.

OPM's Personnel Assessment and Selection Resource Center (<http://apps.opm.gov/ADT/Content.aspx?page=TOC&JScript=1>) and the Assessment Decision Tool (at the same link), also have extensive resource lists.

## **What test or scoring information must agencies protect?**

Agencies are required to comply with a security agreement that states that only applicants of an agency job opportunity may access the assessments. To view a sample security agreement, please visit the USA Hire Resource Center and reference the USA Hire Job Aid.

## **OPERATIONAL QUESTIONS**

### **When using the USA Hire Standard Assessments, how can agencies assess applicants' technical competencies?**

Agencies have the option of using USA Hire Standard Assessments as a stand-alone assessment or combining USA Hire with an assessment questionnaire in USA Staffing. When combining a rating assessment questionnaire in USA Staffing with USA Hire standard assessments, the rating assessment questionnaire must only measure technical competencies and general competencies not already assessed through USA Hire. To determine which competencies to target in the rating assessment questionnaire, consult your agency job analysis data or conduct a job analysis.

### **Can agencies use additional assessments, such as structured interviews, to measure additional competencies after a certificate is issued?**

Yes, after the certificate is issued, you may follow internal protocols for additional assessments, such as structured interviews and written demonstrations. Contact a USA Hire Solutions Manager at [USAHire@opm.gov](mailto:USAHire@opm.gov) if your agency would like to partner with OPM to create additional assessments.

### **How are the USA Hire assessments scored?**

The scoring protocols are based on occupational analysis results for the specific occupation and grade as well as the psychometric characteristics of the assessments. Therefore, assessments and scoring protocols may vary by occupation and grade. There are a number of different scoring protocols used depending on the specific assessment in the USA Hire assessment battery.

If you choose to combine USA Hire standard assessments with an assessment questionnaire (AQ), the additional step in scoring is to determine the weighting protocol. The first step is to determine the appropriate weighting protocol for the USA Hire/AQ combination based on job analysis and in partnership with Hiring Manager/Subject Matter Experts. Agencies must always communicate the

weighting to the USA Hire Solutions Manager. Scores will be standardized and then combined using the agency provided weighting. The HR Specialist should maintain documentation of the decision and rationale per agency policies and procedures. Please visit the USA Hire Resource Center and reference the USA Hire Standard Assessments Job Aid for a copy of the USA Hire Weighting Worksheet.

USA Hire provides numerical results on the assessments. HR Users may use this score in the referral process or assign category cutoff values.

### **Does use of USA Hire change any veterans' preference rules?**

No. Current veterans' preference policies remain in effect and are not affected by the assessments. In instances where a veteran applies outside of the open period, the HR Specialist handling the vacancy should inform a USA Hire Solutions Manager at [USAHire@opm.gov](mailto:USAHire@opm.gov) to start processes needed for applicant testing.

### **How long will it take before agencies receive the results from the assessments?**

Normally, results will be transferred from USA Hire three to five business days after the JOA closes. If there are any applicants requesting Reasonable Accommodations for testing, scoring results may be delayed until those applicants requesting Reasonable Accommodations have been adjudicated and tested, as needed. HR users are notified when all applicant scoring is completed and the applicant scores have been transferred from USA Hire to USA Staffing. HR Specialists may then manually verify applicants' minimum qualifications. HR Specialists may not override any eligibility statuses in the applicant records until OPM notifies them that the USA Hire results are available for agency use. Note: there are some circumstances where results may be held for a short period to ensure verification that all results have successfully transferred.

### **Are there resources available to assist the HR Specialist in creating the vacancy?**

Yes. When creating a vacancy using USA Hire, the HR Specialist can reference the *USA Hire Staffing Job Aid* on the [USA Hire Resource Center](#).

### **Who should the HR Specialists contact if they have questions about their USA Hire vacancies?**

The HR Specialists should first contact their agency's USA Hire lead. They may also contact the agency's USA Staffing Account Manager or the help desk at <https://eshelp.opm.gov>.

## **APPLICANT SPECIFIC QUESTIONS**

### **How will OPM assist applicants needing reasonable accommodations to complete the online USA Hire assessments?**

The reasonable accommodation item in the USA Staffing Announcement Questionnaire offers applicants the opportunity to alert OPM if they require an assessment accommodation. Applicants who respond "Yes" to this item will not receive their USA Hire email invitation immediately. The JOA instructs applicants on how to request a reasonable accommodation for the assessments, including contact information for an OPM Accommodation Coordinator and a link to the documents required to submit a request.

OPM must receive requests for reasonable accommodation prior to the announcement closing. If the request is adjudicated positively, OPM will ensure the applicant receives the appropriate accommodation when completing the assessments. If the request is not adjudicated positively, the applicant will have the opportunity to complete the standard version of the assessment batteries. Applicants who request an accommodation will have 48 hours from when their link is sent or until 48 hours after the close of the JOA, whichever is later, to complete the USA Hire assessments.

For additional information, please visit the [USA Hire Resource Center](#) and reference the *USA Hire Job Aid*.

### **How long do applicants have to complete the assessments at USA Hire?**

In most cases, applicants have until 48 hours after the close of the job opportunity announcement to complete the assessments. If an applicant requests a reasonable accommodation that is adjudicated after the assessments would normally close, he/she will have 48 hours after the assessment link is sent or until 48 hours after the close of the JOA, whichever is later, to complete the USA Hire assessments.

### **How do applicants access the USA Hire assessments?**

Eligible applicants will receive an invitation email from [assessments@USAHire.opm.gov](mailto:assessments@USAHire.opm.gov) containing a unique link that automatically logs the applicant in at USA Hire. If the applicant has previously completed all required assessment batteries, he/she will receive a courtesy email notifying him/her that no further action is required.

### **Can applicants log out of the USA Hire assessments and then log back in?**

Yes. Applicants have the opportunity to log out of the assessments and log back in to complete them at a later time.

### **What kind of notification and guidance does the applicant receive throughout the process?**

Applicants receive all status updates and notifications typically sent through USA Staffing and USAJOBS during the application process. In addition, the job opportunity announcement, the onscreen instructions at Application Manager, and the USA Hire invitation email all provide specific instructions on what applicants can expect and how applicants should complete the next steps in the process.

### **What happens if an applicant does not complete the USA Hire assessments?**

The applicant will not be available for certification. USA Hire will automatically send back an IM ineligible code for applicants who do not complete the USA Hire online assessments. This status code will inform the applicant he or she is ineligible due to not completing a required assessment.

### **What happens if the applicant forwards the USA Hire invite email to someone else to take the assessment?**

Following each USA Hire assessment, applicants must certify the information provided and/or that their responses to assessment items are correct and provided in good faith. As stated on the Certification page, "cheating or other dishonest conduct when completing the online assessments may lead to your

disqualification from the application process and from seeking Federal employment in the future (5 C.F.R. part 731). If you are a current Federal employee, you may be removed or debarred from Federal Service.” Applicant responses are subject to investigation and identified cheating or unauthorized use of the platform will lead to serious penalties.

### **For how long may applicants use USA Hire scores for future job opportunity announcements using USA Hire?**

An applicant’s results for an assessment will be used for future job opportunity announcements using USA Hire for a period of one year post completion of the assessment.

### **How does USA Hire block an applicant from re-taking the assessments before the one-year retest period is complete?**

All eligible applicants receive an assigned unique identifier based on information gathered during the application process. The unique identifier is used to determine if an applicant has already completed an assessment. If the applicant has previously completed all required assessments, he/she will receive a courtesy email notifying him/her that no further action is required.

### **Are applicants prompted to re-take the USA Hire assessments after one year?**

No. Applicants are not pro-actively prompted by USA Hire to update their scores on a USA Hire assessment after one year. If an applicant applies to a position in which they previously completed the USA Hire assessment and their score may no longer be re-used, they will receive a link to access and complete the USA Hire assessments.

### **Will the applicant know what their USA Hire score is?**

You may share category assignment or numerical score information with applicants according to your agency policies. The USA Hire helpdesk will not provide results to applicants.

### **Where can applicants get more information or request help regarding JOAs using USA Hire?**

The contact person listed on the Job Opportunity Announcement is the first point of contact for addressing applicant questions. In addition, a special applicant help desk has been established at [helpdesk@usahire.opm.gov](mailto:helpdesk@usahire.opm.gov) to resolve any issues that may arise for applicants completing USA Hire assessments. Agencies that have their own applicant service centers or help desks should have this email address readily available in the event an applicant reports technical issues with the USA Hire system or has other USA Hire questions. Technical assistance is available Monday through Friday 7 am to 7 pm ET. The Help Desk is closed on weekends and Federal Holidays.