

Hiring for Skills, Not Diplomas

Of the states that have taken action to reorient state hiring to skills over diplomas, the states below have [reported](#) the biggest gains in the share of state job openings that don't require vacancies over 2019-2024.

ALASKA

- In 2023, Governor Mike Dunleavy issued an [administrative order](#) that (1) directs the Department of Administration to identify jobs that do not legally require a four-year college degree where applicable practical experience could substitute for qualification and (2) requires state job postings to require practical experience instead of degree whenever possible.
- The share of postings that did not require a degree [rose](#) 15 points, from 62% in 2019 to 77% in 2024.

COLORADO

- Governor Jared Polis has issued three executive orders:
 - A 2022 [executive order](#) that directs state agencies and departments to incorporate a skill-based selection plan for at least 25% of state vacancies by the end of 2022, provide training for HR staff to hire for skills, and establish a way to monitor data and evaluate these changes.
 - Another 2022 [executive order](#) that directs state agencies to develop Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) that help people gain the kinds of skills needed for state employment, calling for 20% more RAPs and 20% more apprentices in state agencies by June 2023; and,
 - A 2023 [executive order](#) that supersedes the 2022 skill-based hiring executive order and directs the state to grow the number of RAPs by 50% by June 2024, create 10 work-based learning programs for state jobs by June 2025, and establish at least two work-based learning programs in each state department for state jobs that are highly needed and/or touch multiple agencies by December 2025.
- His 2022 budget [included](#) \$700,000 to implement these executive orders and promote skill-based hiring practices for state job opportunities. Those funds supported three new positions to lead this implementation.
- The state set additional specific [goals](#): At least 50% of eligible state jobs will require specific skills in lieu of specific degrees by 2024 and all eligible state jobs will do so by 2025.
- The share of postings that did not require a degree [rose](#) 13 points, from 45% in 2019 to 58% in 2024.

IDAHO

- In 2024, the state enacted a [law](#) that prohibits state agencies from requiring a postsecondary degree and explicitly allows candidates to demonstrate qualifications through employment or volunteer experience, skill-based certificates, badges, or professional certifications.
- The share of postings that did not require a degree [rose](#) 11 points, from 65% in 2019 to 76% in 2024.

MASSACHUSETTS

- In 2024, Governor Maura Healey issued an [executive order](#) that directed the state's executive agencies and departments to hire on the basis of skills to analyze whether degrees are necessary for different positions, and to offer training for hiring on the basis of skills. It also prohibited future job postings and updates to existing postings from requiring degrees unless necessary, and encouraged local governments and non-executive state entities to follow suit.
- The share of postings that did not require a degree [rose](#) 8 points, from 26% in 2019 to 34% in 2024.

MARYLAND

- In 2022, Governor Larry Hogan [announced](#) the state would no longer require four-year college degrees for many state jobs.
- The state launched a ["No Degree, No Problem" campaign](#) that examined 2,500 "master job specifications" used by the state, moved existing language in state job postings about how experience could substitute for degrees and made that the first bullet, and added these experience substitutions to other state job postings.
 - This exercise meant half the state's jobs included a new or enhanced "experience substitution."
 - 34% more "Skilled Through Alternative Routes" candidates (STARs) applied to state jobs in the six months following.
- In 2024, the state [budget](#) appropriated \$150,000 to study ways to increase skill-based hiring.
- Maryland has [worked closely](#) with a leading organization promoting skill-based hiring called [Opportunity at Work](#) to proactively recruit STARs to state job openings.
- The share of postings that did not require a degree [rose](#) 16 points, from 36% in 2019 to 52% in 2024.

NORTH CAROLINA

- In 2023, Governor Roy Cooper issued an [executive order](#) that directed state agencies to (1) explain in postings for jobs, where a combination of experience and education is allowed, how experience can qualify a candidate to perform the position's duties; (2) reassess whether experience could substitute for educational attainment for jobs where such a combination is currently not allowed; (3) "eliminate unnecessary management preferences for degrees;" (4) institute training to help agencies hire on the basis of skills; and (5) promote "trainee progression pathways and apprenticeships."
- The share of postings that did not require a degree [rose](#) 5 points, from 54% in 2019 to 59% in 2024.

SOUTH DAKOTA

- In 2023, Governor Kristi Noem issued an [executive order](#) that requires (1) the review of state job postings requiring an advanced degree and evaluate if necessary, (2) postings to state that no postsecondary degree is necessary when applicable, and (3) the consideration of work and life experiences in determining candidate

qualifications. The executive order explicitly names workforce expertise, apprenticeship programs, career and technical college certificates and degrees, and military service as among valid qualifications in lieu of traditional four-year postsecondary degrees.

- The share of postings that did not require a degree [rose](#) 9 points, from 55% in 2019 to 64% in 2024.

TENNESSEE

- In 2022, the state enacted a [law](#) that prohibits state agencies from requiring a baccalaureate degree (typically a four-year college degree) for state employment unless necessary for the position.
- The share of postings that did not require a degree [rose](#) 12 points, from 27% in 2019 to 39% in 2024.

UTAH

- In 2021, the state enacted a [law](#) that prohibits state agencies from including educational requirements in job postings for career positions other than those legally necessary, requires those postings to be “based” in the necessary skills and competencies to carry out the the role, and requires the consideration of comparable experience and skills in evaluating candidates.
- In 2022, Governor Spencer Cox also [announced](#) that 98% of the state’s classified jobs in his Administration do not require bachelor degrees.
- The share of postings that did not require a degree [rose](#) 9 points, from 65% in 2019 to 74% in 2024.

VIRGINIA

- In 2023, Governor Glenn Youngkin [announced](#) the elimination of degree requirements and preferences for about 90% of state jobs.
- The share of postings that did not require a degree [rose](#) 32 points, from 58% in 2019 to 90% in 2024.
- Building on this progress, in 2025, the state enacted a [law](#) that prohibits state agencies from requiring a bachelor degree if not necessary for the specific position.

Tapping Former Federal Talent for State Government

CALIFORNIA

- On March 3, 2025, Governor Gavin Newsom issued an [executive order](#) that directs the state’s HR agency, CalHR, to:
 - “[a]ssess vacant jobs that match skills needed in the State workforce with the qualifications of former federal employees in need of new opportunities” with a focus on professions directly helpful for natural disasters like weather modeling.
 - Launch a website specifically for former federal employees with resources like lists of open jobs, job fairs, and a framework for translating specific federal service to the state level.

HAWAII

- On February 18, 2025, Governor Josh Green issued an [executive order](#) that directs the state to:

- [Launch Operation Hire Hawai'i](#) to prioritize the recruitment of former federal employees and facilitate their speedy hiring where skills match needs;
- Expedite hiring processes including "streamlined applications and fast-track credential evaluations," creating a timeline of just [14 days](#) from application to hire;
- Designate specific agency contacts to assist former federal employees through the hiring process;
- Adjust recruitment strategies and tap untraditional mechanisms to bring on former federal employees, such as directing appointments and temporary-to-permanent placements;
- Ensure mentorship and advancement opportunities for former federal employees;
- Collaborate amongst state agencies to find sources of funding to support this work; and
- Provide quarterly reports to the governor's office on this initiative.

MARYLAND

- On February 28, 2025, Governor Wes Moore [announced](#):
 - The [Maryland Public Servants Resource website](#) to help laid off federal workers access new employment opportunities, including almost 130,000 open jobs, including private sector opportunities. As of mid-April 2025, the website had 109,000 unique visitors and received 152,000 views.
 - A [new resource page](#) on Teach Maryland's website to support federal workers interested in starting a second career with Maryland's public schools, which both connects Marylanders with jobs and closes the teacher shortage at the same time.
 - Updated processes at the state Department of Management and Budget to expedite hiring to accommodate an influx of applications from federal workers;
 - A forthcoming guidebook from the state Department of Transportation to help former federal employees understand how their federal service translates to state opportunities;
 - Job fairs held with local partners; and
 - A partnership with Work for America's [Civic Match](#) program to link former federal employees with state and local government job opportunities.
- On April 18, 2025, Governor Moore [announced](#) the state would allow former federal employees to submit a single job application to apply for multiple state openings for HR professionals, procurement officers, accountants, and fiscal account technicians, even across different agencies. These applications are expedited to conduct interviews within a few weeks.
 - This opportunity to submit a single, streamlined application with expedited review was scheduled to close on May 2, but is expected to [reopen](#) intermittently in the future.
- On April 22, 2025, Governor Moore signed [HB 1424](#) into law, creating a temporary Expedited Hiring Program (expiring in April 2026) for these employees where time-to-hire should be no more than 40 days.
- In May 2025, the state [launched](#) a \$1 million initiative to support former federal employees to become teachers in Maryland. With funds flowing through 11 institutions of higher education in the state, the program is offering training and alternative certification pathways.
- The state Department of Labor has [offered](#) multiple job fairs at the state level specifically for former federal employees and also provided information on how those who are also former state employees may be eligible for reinstatement into state jobs.

NEW YORK

- On March 27, 2025 the Governor Kathy Hochul [announced](#):
 - [Free weekly career development webinars](#) for former federal employees.
 - The state had launched a new [website](#) for former federal employees with resources including job fairs. NYSDOL staff reach out to each person who signs up for services on that website to help connect them with opportunities and provide help along the way.
- In the 2025 legislative session, the legislature introduced a bill ([SB 7716](#)) to provide a five year service credit to former federal employees who become employed by the state.

PENNSYLVANIA

- On March 5, 2025, Governor Josh Shapiro issued an [executive order](#) that directs the Office of Administration to:
 - Regard federal government experience as equivalent to Commonwealth work experience for civil service roles;
 - Hold virtual and in-person job fairs; and
 - Launch a user-friendly [website](#) specifically tailored to recently departed federal employees. The website must “[i]dentify those job titles within the Federal Government that the Office of Administration has determined are equivalent to those job titles identified” as the “top recruitment needs.”
- In the weeks following this executive order, [1,110 applications](#) for state jobs in Pennsylvania were submitted from 700 people who have worked for the federal government.

WASHINGTON

- In the 2025 legislative session, the legislature introduced a bill ([SB 5767](#)) to prioritize hiring former federal employees, similar to existing state law that gives hiring preference to veterans.
 - The bill specifically would have provided this preference to employees who left federal service under Executive Order 14210 or due to the constraints on remote work under the Presidential Memorandum on January 20, 2025. It would have added 5% to the evaluation score of these candidates, just as it does to certain veterans.
 - Although this bill did not pass, it provides a sample of impactful legislation for other states looking to tap into former federal talent.

WISCONSIN

- In March 2025, the state [launched](#) a [website](#) for former federal employees to access job opportunities in the state that got [8,000 hits](#) in its first weeks.
- In March 2025, the state also [announced](#) multiple virtual job fairs that [300 people](#) would go on to attend.

NEW MEXICO AND VIRGINIA also launched websites ([NM](#), [VA](#)) compiling existing state resources for former federal employees and offered job fairs ([NM](#), [VA](#)) for this population as well.

Pursuing Additional Innovation to Improve Hiring Processes and Employment

NEW YORK

- In April 2023, mindful of the particular need to fill state vacancies in health and safety roles immediately, the New York State Department of Civil Service launched the [NY Hiring for Emergency Placement Statewide \(NY HELPS\) Program](#). “This program streamlines the appointment process to allow State agencies to hire diverse, qualified permanent employees quickly and without examinations. New State employees hired under the NY HELPS Program will be appointed on a permanent basis.”
 - NY HELPS has since expanded the initiative to include more job opportunities and all state agencies.
 - As of May 2025, [28,473](#) people have been hired into state roles through NY HELPS.

MICHIGAN

- The [Michigan Career Portal](#), hosted by the state’s Economic Development Corporation, [uses AI](#) to better match resumes to job postings, improving upon prior approaches that bluntly paired resumes to openings based on keywords which can have different meanings across positions. The AI tool analyzes a host of factors for each candidate including credentials and experience and compares them to the specifications of individual jobs, producing a match score for each applicant for well-fitting job openings. The portal boasts an average rate of 15% for “application button clicks,” outperforming the industry average of 5%.

PENNSYLVANIA

- Starting in January 2023, the [Office of Administration](#) expedited hiring for certain positions, focusing on those involved in permits, licenses, or similar credentials; hosted events where people could apply, be interviewed, and even receive a conditional job offer on the spot; and closely monitored data on the length of hiring processes.
- On May 13, 2024, Governor Shapiro issued an [executive order](#) that created the Hire, Improve, Recruit, Empower (HIRE) Committee populated by senior leadership in the Administration to make recommendations for how to enhance Pennsylvania’s ability to quickly hire top talent.
 - Among other things, the executive order also called for ways to make the state a more attractive workplace by directing the Office of Administration to expand internship, apprenticeship, and fellowship opportunities to develop internal candidates; develop English skills among the workforce; and create a program to mentor recently returning veterans and help them network; and expand space for potential child care offerings to state employees.
 - These efforts corresponded to a decrease in the average time to fill state vacancies from [90 days](#) at the start of the Shapiro Administration to [62 days](#) as of June 2024 to [58 days](#) in Spring 2025, an overall drop of 35%.
- The Shapiro Administration recently [announced](#) it will use AI to help reach its goal of filling state job openings within 50 days.

DIRECT HIRE AUTHORITY

- States have an opportunity to pioneer an equivalent of the federal [Direct Hire Authority](#), which allows expedited hiring for critical needs and/or when a severe shortage of candidates exists. It waives certain components of the traditional federal selection process that have limited hiring managers' flexibility, including requiring those managers to select from only three candidates chosen by others.

To learn more about the state policies to leverage policy and technology innovation to streamline how they can recruit, hire, and retain top-tier talent, **please contact Katherine Gaztambide at katherine@responsivegov.org.**