Benchmarking Hiring Strategies: Insights for the Postal Service's Pre-Career Hiring Practices

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Executive Summary

The U.S. Postal Service plays a vital role in the life of this nation, serving nearly 169 million addresses nationwide. To deliver on its mission, today and in the future, the Postal Service needs to recruit and hire employees in every part of the country. However, the Postal Service currently faces several workforce-related challenges. The Postal Service struggles to retain its pre-career employees and attract enough applicants to fill some open positions, as its workforce continues to age and approach retirement. Between fiscal years 2021-2023, over half of the agency's job postings for pre-career positions did not receive any applications, 18 percent of newly hired pre-career employees did not show up for orientation or their first day of work in FY 2023, and one-third left the agency within their first 90 days. The Postal Service's challenges are compounded by a tight labor market, with the competition for talent projected to remain intense in the years ahead.

To inform the Postal Service's recruiting, hiring, and onboarding strategies, the OIG reviewed a sample of organizations in the public and private sectors to identify their best practices. These practices include building a brand as an employer of choice to attract talent, pursuing a multi-channel recruitment strategy to reach potential job candidates, quickly bringing new hires on board, providing a positive candidate experience, and boosting retention with effective onboarding.

Recruitment

To attract talent, leading organizations not only post job announcements on their websites, but they actively seek out candidates who possess the right skills, both online and in-person. They form partnerships with local organizations, such as academic institutions and the military community; rely on rank-and-file employees outside of HR to help recruit candidates; use social media strategically to increase visibility with potential applicants; and participate in career fairs, hiring events, and/or informational sessions.

Additionally, organizations the OIG researched develop an organizational brand that appeals to potential applicants. They promote their brands by publicizing awards they have won, such as membership on the Forbes Best Employers list, and they highlight perks such as developmental opportunities, workplace flexibility, and a healthy work-life balance. They also put videos on their websites showcasing their work, culture, and values, and some include employee testimonials. Public sector organizations (including foreign posts), which may be unable to match the private sector on pay, tout their "total rewards package," including good benefits and a positive employee experience.

Hiring and Improving the Candidate Experience

Building a high-quality workforce depends on selecting the best candidates from the applicant pool and bringing them on board as quickly and efficiently as possible.

The OIG found that some organizations have reduced time to hire by implementing several practices. These include systematically tracking applicants through each step of the hiring process, hosting one-stop-shop hiring events to hire quickly and at scale, and using artificial intelligence to supplement the HR workforce. Additionally, some parcel carriers make tentative job offers soon after candidates complete an application. To ensure applicants have a clear and realistic understanding of the job so fewer quit in the early stages of their employment, some organizations post "day in the life" videos on their hiring websites.

Some organizations included in the OIG's sample also prioritize improving the candidate experience to reduce the number of applicants who drop out of the hiring process prematurely. Promising practices the OIG identified include developing AI-driven chatbots to guide applicants, supplementing lengthy text on hiring websites with short videos, and devising ways to communicate regularly and effectively with candidates throughout the hiring process to keep them engaged.

Onboarding

Onboarding is an opportunity to introduce new employees to the organization and ensure new hires have the job-related knowledge they need to be strong contributors. Many organizations the OIG researched are working to standardize their onboarding processes to ensure that every employee receives a consistent experience, regardless of their work location.

In addition to standardization, some organizations have focused on making onboarding more personal by creating "buddy" programs, increasing touchpoints between supervisors and new hires, establishing mentorship programs, and distributing "welcome kits" to new employees.

Progress and Opportunities at the Postal Service

The Postal Service has already adopted many talent acquisition best practices that align with those used by other organizations. In recent years, it shortened the hiring process for most pre-career bargaining positions by eliminating interviews and relying on a virtual assessment instead, centralizing the hiring process, and allowing employees to begin work with an interim background check.

The Postal Service also stated it is actively working to strengthen its recruitment, hiring, and onboarding practices to address existing challenges, as reflected in its *Delivering for America 2.0* plan. For example, the agency is introducing a new applicant tracking system which it anticipates will streamline communication and engagement with applicants. Further, USPS implemented changes to its onboarding program to improve retention, including requiring supervisors to hold regularly scheduled performance discussions, establishing formalized mentorship

opportunities, and enabling some new hires to shadow a more experienced employee for one day.

While USPS uses these practices to fill all types of positions, they are particularly important for filling the most critical gaps in the Postal Service's labor force – pre-career positions. By optimizing and expanding their use, the odds of viable job candidates dropping out of the process prematurely can be minimized. While this research did not evaluate the implementation of these practices by the Postal Service, a recent OIG audit report acknowledged progress in how USPS onboards pre-career employees and identified opportunities for further improvement.

The Postal Service is fairly unique in its scale, operational complexity, and the demanding nature of its work. While its mission, compensation, and benefits can serve as strong incentives for potential job applicants, inherent aspects of the job can make it difficult for even the best hiring practices to attract enough qualified applicants in all geographic locations. However, there are valuable lessons to be learned from the practices of other organizations facing similar challenges, particularly in emerging areas such as using AI to support hiring practices, and communicating job expectations realistically to applicants. While not every organization highlighted in this white paper is directly comparable to the Postal Service, their best practices can nevertheless inform how USPS recruits, hires, and onboards new employees. As the Postal Service continues to refine and develop its strategies to improve talent acquisition, actively monitoring market trends — particularly in relation to incorporating technology into its processes — could help further optimize the Postal Service's talent acquisition efforts.

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Observations

Introduction

The American people depend heavily on the U.S. Postal Service, with the agency serving nearly 169 million addresses in every town, city, and state. By strengthening the social fabric, facilitating communication and commerce, and helping people vote, the Postal Service plays an integral role in American life. To serve the country, the Postal Service depends on a workforce of 637,000, of whom roughly 104,000 are pre-career employees.[1] Pre-career employees are temporary workers who do not receive the same employee benefits as career employees and are not always guaranteed a regular schedule, providing the Postal Service with cost and operational flexibility.[2] The majority of new field employees are hired as pre-career and may later become eligible for a career position. The USPS workforce processes, transports, and delivers over 340 million pieces of mail and packages each day, and staff more than 31,000 post offices, stations, branches, and annexes. To deliver for the American people now and in the future, the Postal Service must be able to recruit and hire the employees it needs across the country.

USPS Faces Challenges in Recruiting and Retaining the Employees it Needs

Currently, the Postal Service faces challenges in attracting enough applicants to fill some open positions, establishing itself as an employer of choice, and retaining employees. For example, a U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) audit report found that over half of the Postal Service's job postings for pre-career positions received no applications between fiscal years 2021–2023.[3] USPS' national annual retention rate fell from 47.3 percent in FY 2023 to 43.2 percent in FY 2024.[4] Moreover, one-third of pre-career employees who were hired left

the Postal Service within their first 90 days in FY 2023. Problematically, a 2021 OIG white paper found that USPS employees rated their workplace experience lower than employees at the agency's shipping and logistics competitors on job and recruiting websites.

Another OIG audit report found that while there have been some improvements in filling supervisor and pre-career vacancies, challenges still remain due to internal and external factors, including a lack of qualified applicants and hardships in certain geographic locations. Challenges are acute in high cost of living areas, particularly among pre-career employees. The same report also noted challenges with filling supervisor vacancies at new Regional Processing and Distribution Centers (RPDCs).[5]

At the same time, the Postal Service's workforce is aging, with a substantial number of employees either currently eligible to retire or approaching retirement eligibility. For example, 18 percent of the workforce is currently eligible to retire, and an additional 19 percent will be eligible within the next five years. Altogether, over half of the workforce — 53 percent — will be eligible to retire within the next decade. While employees do not always retire as soon as they are eligible and the Postal Service's staffing needs may change over time (due to automation or volume changes, for example), it is important for the agency to be prepared.

Labor Market Tightness Could Make Recruiting and Hiring More Difficult

A challenging U.S. labor market could also complicate the Postal Service's efforts to recruit and hire the workforce it needs. While the labor market has recently shown signs of cooling, it remains strong. As of May 2025, the U.S. unemployment rate remains near a historical low at 4.2 percent and the labor force participation rate remains below its pre-

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1   At the end of fiscal year 2024.
2   Pre-career employees include rural carrier associates, city carrier assistants, postal support employees, and mail handler assistants.
3   The Postal Service stated that this figure is influenced by repeat job postings for the same position in hard-to-staff areas, and not reflective of the agency's overall staffing situation.
4   As calculated by the OIG. See USPS Office of Inspector General, *Pre-Career Retention Initiatives*, Audit Report No. 24-131-R35, March 31, 2025, https://www.uspsoig.gov/reports/audit-reports/pre-career-retention-initiatives, p.6.
5   For example, 57 percent of frontline supervisor positions at the Atlanta RPDC were vacant for at least four months. USPS Office of Inspector General, *The OIG's Oversight of the U.S. Postal Service's Delivering for America Plan — Volume 2*, Project No. 25-034-R25, April 29, 2025, https://www.uspsoig.gov/reports/audit-reports/oigs-oversight-us-postal-services-delivering-america-plan-volume-2, p.8.

pandemic level, indicating a smaller pool of job candidates from which employers can recruit. As of April 2025, there were the same number of unemployed people as job openings. In a 2023 survey of nearly 500 companies, 59 percent of respondents said they cannot find and attract top talent.

The hiring landscape is expected to remain challenging as demographic shifts shrink the labor pool and put additional strain on employers. By 2030, one in five Americans is projected to be 65 or older, and the U.S. fertility rate is expected to decline in the years ahead. However, population changes will vary across regions of the country, meaning the Postal Service may experience the impact of an aging workforce unevenly across different areas.

Public and Private Sector Organizations Are Improving How They Acquire New Talent

The Postal Service must compete with the public and private sectors alike for a limited pool of talent, and both sectors have recently taken steps to improve how they recruit and hire new employees. For its part, the Postal Service pledged in its *Delivering for America* (DFA) 10-year plan to "be an employer of choice that hires, develops, and retains the most capable and diverse employees."[6] Private sector companies have also responded to labor market tightness by experimenting with new ways to attract new staff. Particularly creative examples include Chipotle piloting a program that allowed job candidates to submit video resumes on the social media platform TikTok, and Denny's offering a free pancake breakfast to job applicants. The Postal Service has taken steps to improve how it recruits, hires, and onboards new pre-career employees. For example, the agency upgraded its technology (including its careers website) to improve the applicant experience and make the hiring process faster and more efficient. However, recent challenges suggest there are opportunities for further enhancement. Indeed, a March 2025 OIG audit of the Postal Service's pre-career retention initiatives identified some progress in how the agency onboards new employees, but recommended additional improvements.[7]

There is also evidence that the competition for blue-collar talent will be intense. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that the warehousing and storage, and courier and messenger industries will add employees between 2023–2033. These blue-collar sectors approximate the type of work done by some USPS employees.

To help inform the Postal Service's recruiting, hiring, and onboarding strategies today and in the future, the OIG reviewed a sample of public and private sector organizations to identify their best practices. The sample includes organizations like the Postal Service, with large, blue-collar workforces that are geographically dispersed and represented by labor unions, as well as other organizations with promising talent acquisition practices. While the number of employees that are comparable to the Postal Service's pre-career workforce varies across the organizations the OIG researched, and not every organization is as large and complex as the Postal Service, each of the best practices identified in this paper could potentially be relevant to USPS. These practices include building a brand as an employer of choice, finding creative ways to reach and recruit potential job candidates, quickly bringing new employees on board, and providing a robust onboarding experience to boost retention. While the Postal Service has already adopted many best practices implemented by other organizations, there may be opportunities to enhance their effectiveness. Monitoring other organizations' techniques can inform the Postal Service's talent acquisition practices.

Recruitment: Building an Appealing Brand and Proactively and Strategically Recruiting Job Applicants

To attract talent, leading organizations do much more than post job announcements on their websites and hope that applicants with the right skills find them and apply. A "passive" approach to recruitment limits organizations' ability to strategically target sources of talent that are likely to yield the best applicants. As one HR leader told the OIG, "The 'post-and-pray' method does not work." Instead, leading

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6   U.S. Postal Service, *Delivering for America*, https://about.usps.com/what/strategic-plans/delivering-for-america/assets/USPS_Delivering-For-America.pdf, p. 37.
7   USPS OIG, *Pre-Career Retention Initiatives,* Audit Report No. 24-131-R25, March 31, 2025, https://www.uspsoig.gov/reports/audit-reports/pre-career-retention-initiatives.

organizations develop and market a compelling organizational brand that makes people want to work for them, and they proactively pursue prospective job applicants online and in-person.

Appealing to Job Candidates by Creating a Compelling Brand

A strong organizational brand can set companies apart when competing for talent. Having a mission, culture, and values that are admired by potential job candidates can make an organization seem like a more attractive place to work. In a survey of HR leaders at nearly 500 companies conducted by the research firm Mercer, investing in an organization's brand was cited as the best way to overcome hiring challenges. To brand themselves as employers of choice, organizations the OIG researched creatively tell their stories, highlight the impact employees can have on the mission and the public good, and market a "total rewards" package. To optimize these efforts, organizations can tailor their messaging according to the type of candidate they are trying to attract. For example, Posten Bring, the Norwegian post, surveyed and conducted focus groups with thousands of its employees to determine what matters most to different segments of the workforce, and used those findings to customize how it markets its positions to prospective job candidates.

Telling the Organization's Story in a Creative Way

Welcome Videos and Employee Testimonials

Some organizations post welcome videos on their hiring websites to introduce themselves to job applicants. Welcome videos can convey information about the organization in a dynamic and engaging way. For example, CSX Transportation, one of the country's largest railroad companies, has a professional 90-second video describing its mission, vision, and values.[8]

Many organizations also post employee testimonials on their hiring pages and social media accounts, attempting to convey insights about the work environment that feel authentic in a way that traditional job announcements cannot. Positive employee testimonials can attract talent by highlighting aspects of the workplace that employees value most, such as work-life balance or career advancement opportunities. Employee testimonials can also make an organization more relatable to potential hires, and they can help applicants see themselves represented in the workforce.

For example, the Postal Service's YouTube page includes videos of employees discussing what drew them to the agency, what they like about their jobs, and the challenges they encounter. Similarly, Royal Mail, the United Kingdom's postal operator, posts videos of its employees describing their jobs and discussing what attracted them to the company. Some videos appear to be filmed by employees with their phones as they sort and deliver mail while narrating what they are doing, adding an air of authenticity to the content.[9] While videos are one way to showcase the workforce and connect with potential job applicants, the United Parcel Service's website includes an "Our Stories" blog, featuring short, written profiles of its employees and their inspirational stories.

Publicizing Awards

Another way organizations tell their stories and brand themselves as employers of choice is by publicizing the awards they have won. Highlighting awards on their hiring websites may build credibility with jobseekers who want to align themselves with successful and reputable employers, and help organizations stand out in a competitive job market. Many organizations the OIG researched mention awards and honors on their hiring websites. FedEx references its appearance on Forbes' list of the best large employers. Similarly, Walmart notes that it was named one of the Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For in 2025.

Emphasizing How Employees Can Impact the Mission and Advance the Public Good

Employees look for purpose in their jobs, and they want to understand how the work they do advances their organization's mission. Some organizations the OIG researched try to emphasize purpose and mission when selling their job opportunities. Royal Mail appeals to public service-oriented job seekers

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8   Video accessible at CSX, "Working at CSX," https://www.csx.com/index.cfm/working-at-csx/.
9   USPS videos accessible at https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1NEtJgO49CWWIB4_K3iJ_tmGSy8ULbhw. Royal Mail videos accessible at https://careers.royalmailgroup.com/gb/en/Delivery_and_sorting.

with a two-minute video on its career website titled "Delivering for the Country." The video highlights Royal Mail's contributions to the UK dating back to its founding in 1516, emphasizing how the postal operator and its employees serve local communities and connect the nation. Likewise, DHL's career website has a feature that allows candidates to answer a few questions about their background, competencies, and interests, and receive a tailored list of job recommendations.

While a subsection of the Postal Service's hiring website references how employees serve the American people, other organizations highlight their mission more prominently on the main page of their hiring websites and in their job announcements.

Finally, some organizations tout their environmental, social, and governance initiatives (ESG) to appeal to potential applicants, including certifications they received that recognize their efforts. For example, some companies publicize that they are B Corp certified, a designation recognizing high social and environmental standards. An Post, Ireland's postal operator, told the OIG that it highlights its positive record on sustainability, having found that this appeals to younger job candidates.

Marketing a "Total Rewards Package"

While salary ranks high for many job candidates, it is just one factor that makes an organization a desirable place to work. Non-monetary rewards, such as benefits, training opportunities, and a flexible workplace, can also attract top talent. Organizations that advertise a generous "total rewards" package can gain a competitive advantage with job candidates. This is especially true for government agencies that might not be able to compete with the private sector on pay alone.

Job Stability and Benefits

While it is common for organizations to provide information about benefits on their jobs websites, some do so in an especially compelling and informative way. GP Transco, a logistics company with over 500 trucks and 1,200 trailers, devotes a substantial portion of its jobs website to highlighting employee benefits. In addition to more standard

benefits such as health insurance and a 401(k) retirement account, the company advertises that it has state-of-the-art equipment and facilities, and a management style meant to foster employee satisfaction. Rather than merely list its benefits on the website, GP Transco includes a brief description of what each benefit entails, helping to inform and appeal to prospective job candidates.[10] At An Post, recruiters pitch job security by emphasizing the organization's longevity. For its part, to appeal to job candidates considering a pre-career position, the Postal Service told the OIG that it emphasizes its health benefits package and the opportunity to convert to career status when it engages with job candidates, and the agency also mentions benefits in its pre-career job announcements.

Developmental Opportunities and Mobility

Touting developmental opportunities and upward mobility is another way for organizations to market their total rewards package. The Postal Service has a short section on its website where it notes, in general terms, that training and development opportunities are available to employees. In marked contrast, Walmart has an extensive section on its hiring website, called "Working at Walmart," where it discusses training, development, and mobility opportunities, and provides statistics to bring the discussion to life. For example, Walmart notes that, "Entry-level associates receive their first promotion in seven months, on average." To make the content more engaging, Walmart includes a video describing how its developmental opportunities can benefit employees. Some organizations offer employer-sponsored education and continuous learning opportunities and tout these initiatives on their websites. Amazon's "Career Choice Program" and Walmart's "Live Better U" program support employees pursuing a high school diploma, certificate program, or college degree. At FedEx, employees are offered tuition assistance for online degree programs at the University of Arizona Global Campus. Some of these perks benefit blue collar as well as white collar employees, such as Amazon providing assistance to employees seeking to obtain their General Educational Development (GED) degree.

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10   The benefits portion of GP Transco's careers website can be found at https://www.gptransco.com/best-truck-driving-jobs.

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A Flexible Workplace

Offering a flexible workplace, in which employees have some say in when and where work gets done, can also help organizations market their job opportunities. However, some industries primarily have jobs that require employees to work in-person and maintain certain hours and shifts. While these jobs may not be suited to remote work and flexible schedules, which became more common during the COVID-19 pandemic, some employers have found ways to make small but meaningful accommodations. For example, one public transit organization began to allow employees the option to work four 10-hour shifts a week, which proved popular with the workforce. Another public transit organization, in coordination with its union, tested a model that changed how shifts are selected.[11]

A foreign postal operator the OIG researched also promotes a flexible workplace to attract job candidates. PostNL, the Netherlands' postal operator, extended mail delivery until 8 p.m. to provide carriers with more control over their schedules. The company's career website tells prospective mail deliverers that they may decide when to deliver the mail between 11 a.m. and 8 p.m. Similarly, parcel deliverers may choose how many days they work each week. The Postal Service's hiring website does not mention flexibility, however some hiring event announcements advertise "flexible schedules" to entice potential attendees. According to exit survey data, inadequate work schedule flexibility was a top reason that pre-career employees left the Postal Service within their first 90 days between FY 2022-2024. This result may point to an opportunity for the Postal Service to better communicate job expectations to new applicants.

Table 1: Summary: Appealing to Job Candidates by Creating a Compelling Brand

Best practices at organizations the OIG researched	Tell the organization's story in a creative way				Market a total rewards package		
How organizations implement the best practice	Welcome videos on the website	Employee testimonials	Publicize awards	Emphasize mission/ public good	Promote job stability/ benefits	Promote developmental/ mobility opportunities	Promote shift flexibility
Does USPS implement the best practice the same way?	No	Yes, on its YouTube channel	Yes	Yes, but not prominently on its hiring website	Yes	Yes	Partially. Not on the hiring website, but on some hiring event announcements

How Organizations in the Public and Private Sectors Recruit Proactively

Using Rank-and-File Employees to Supplement the HR Workforce

Many organizations the OIG researched use their non-HR, rank-and-file employees to help with recruitment. This can provide much-needed support to an organization's human resources team, and it is a good way to form authentic connections with prospective job candidates. This section presents examples from different organizations, including the Postal Service.

Social Media Employee Advocacy: USPS Zone

One recruiting practice is for employees to repost job announcements on social media sites when their companies are hiring. The Postal Service goes a step further by enabling a small segment of its workforce to share pre-approved content on their personal social media accounts, helping to reach potential job applicants. Participation in the program

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11   American Public Transportation Association, *Transit Workforce Shortage*, March 2023, https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/APTA-Workforce-Shortage-Synthesis-Report-03.2023.pdf, p. 24.

("USPS Zone") is voluntary, and open to Executive and Administrative Schedule employees (EAS). (See Figure 1). EAS positions are non-bargaining, and consist of supervisory, managerial, administrative, clerical, and postmaster roles. For a description of USPS Zone, see Figure 1.

Figure 1: Description of USPS Zone

WHAT IS THE USPS ZONE?

USPS Zone is an employee advocacy program that leverages the power of passionate employees to promote the USPS brand through their personal social media accounts.

Brand-Approved Social Content → USPS Zone → Employee Brand Advocates Sharing through their voice
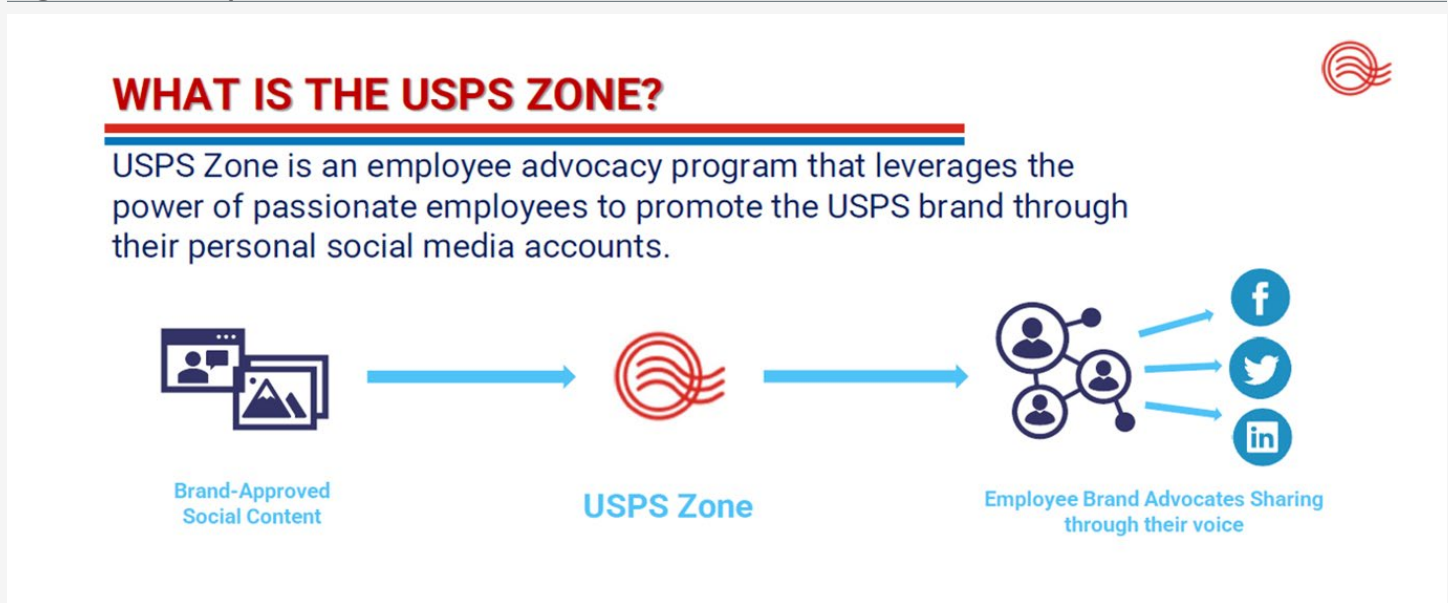
Source: U.S. Postal Service

Interior Recruiting Teams

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) found that job applicants who had never met someone from the agency were more likely to drop out of the hiring process before it concluded. To connect with more potential job applicants in person, the agency leaned on its rank-and-file employees, recently creating "Interior Recruiting Teams." These teams are comprised of law enforcement officers on detail, and they are active in parts of the country where CBP receives many job applications. Members of the Interior Recruiting Teams visit military bases and attend job fairs and other hiring events.

Operators Engaging and Connecting Communities

Municipal organizations also involve their non–HR employees in the recruitment process. Minneapolis' Metro Transit created the "Operators Engaging and Connecting Communities" program (OECC). A goal of the program is to recruit new bus drivers to Metro Transit. The program sends bus operators to events throughout Minneapolis, "from Hmong food markets to Open Streets parades to houses of worship for tabling after services."[12] These bus operators can connect with community members and talk to them about working for Metro Transit, including why the job is meaningful to them. "It's very clear to me after hundreds and hundreds of events...the best way to market this position is to bring an operator with you," one participant in the program explained, according to a Transit Workforce Center report. Drivers are not pulled off the road for OECC events. Instead, the time they spend participating in the program is counted as optional overtime. See Figure 2.

Figure 2: A bus operator participates in an OECC event

Source: Metro Transit

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12   Transit Workforce Center, *Recruiting Through Connection*, https://www.transitworkforce.org/recruiting-through-connection/.

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Empowering Employees

In Ireland, An Post's non-HR employees played a big role in the company's recent recruitment campaign, even though their participation was informal. When An Post asked applicants why they decided to apply for a job, 63 percent said a friend or neighbor recommended the company as a good place to work. An HR leader told the OIG that employees feel valued and trusted, making for effective company ambassadors. At an upcoming recruitment event, An Post plans to invite senior leaders who began their careers processing and delivering mail to showcase the company's growth opportunities.

Figure 3: Postal Service Local Hiring Event Advertisement

Source: St. Sabina Employment Resource Center, https://www.ercsabina.org/events/2023/11/27/us-postal-service-job-fair.

Similarly, the Postal Service told the OIG that it empowers employees to identify local organizations that could make good partners. For example, a postmaster could give a presentation about the Postal Service and its job opportunities at a community gathering or a church group meeting.

The agency also hosts hiring events at local post offices, processing plants, libraries, and other venues where members of the community can speak with USPS employees about job opportunities. See Figure 3.

One shipping company the OIG spoke with advertises that it is hiring on its trucks and includes a QR code. The advertisements can prompt conversations between its drivers and potential job applicants. "Drivers from different companies know each other and they will strike up conversations," an HR leader explained. Other companies offer financial bonuses and incentives to staff who refer new employees. In a survey of public transit organizations, employee referrals were found to be one of the most effective ways to recruit new employees. Amazon and UPS both offer referral bonuses to their employees.

Partnering with Other Organizations

The Postal Service and organizations the OIG researched partner with other organizations to get on the radar of job candidates and grow the talent pool. Partners can include academic institutions, including high schools; downsizing businesses and groups that serve unemployed people; and the U.S. military.

Academic Institutions

Many organizations, including the Postal Service, visit schools or attend career fairs with college students, but some immerse themselves on campus more deeply. FedEx and University of Memphis students and faculty partner on projects, including one that designs predictive fleet maintenance systems. Similarly, C.H. Robinson, a large logistics company, engaged Carnegie Mellon students to develop a model that predicts event-related transportation delays. At Austrian Post, employees advise students on their bachelor's and master's theses. The partnerships provide an opportunity to share information about career opportunities with students, while also helping companies tackle their business challenges. For its part, the Postal Service has several programs for college students and recent college graduates, including a 10-week summer internship, a 24-month Professional Development Program, and a 24-month Emerging Professionals Program. The programs provide mentorship, leadership

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development, and the opportunity to work on projects aligned with their academic training.[13]

High schools can also be fertile recruiting grounds for some organizations. Austrian Post invites high school students to visit its headquarters and processing centers as part of an effort to transform its image. As Austrian Post explained to the OIG, the company wants to show people that it is modern, digitized, and focused on sustainability. The United States Coast Guard partners with a Baltimore City high school to offer students summer internships at a local shipyard.[14] Students receive hands-on vocational training at the shipyard, where the Coast Guard's vessels are constructed, repaired, and renovated. The internships often lead to full-time employment, helping the Coast Guard staff its hard-to-fill vocational positions with people who already have a record of good performance.

Reaching out to Unemployed and Laid Off Workers

Some organizations the OIG researched work with groups that serve unemployed people. Ireland's An Post engages with Back to Work Connect, an organization that helps people who are looking to reenter the workforce after a career break. Posten Bring, the Norwegian postal operator, uses staffing organizations to find new employees. Elsewhere, France Travail — the French national employment agency — and La Poste signed an agreement to collaborate to promote access to employment, strengthen the attractiveness of La Poste's positions, and meet the company's recruitment needs. Other organizations have had success connecting with downsizing businesses. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) contacts organizations that may be downsizing to introduce itself and advertise its job opportunities. For its part, the Postal Service told the OIG that it contacted Boeing and Coca-Cola when they were downsizing. Given the federal government's ongoing effort to reduce its workforce, the Postal Service could also establish relationships with federal agencies that have offices in regions where it has a hiring need. Additionally, the Postal Service could enhance recruitment

efforts in areas with a high concentration of federal employees.

The Military Community

Partnering with organizations that connect the military community with civilian employers is another way to attract talent. Active service members must pass a background investigation, potentially making them more attractive to employers. The Postal Service works with outlets that connect employers with veterans, transitioning military, and military spouses through job boards and career fairs, such as Corporate Gray, Hiring Our Heroes, and RecruitMilitary. USPS also has relationships with regional military transition organizations with whom it advertises its job openings.

Many organizations the OIG researched partner with the military community. The transportation and logistics company J.B. Hunt works with the Department of Defense's DOD SkillBridge, a program that helps service members gain civilian work experience through job training, apprenticeships, or internships during their last 180 days of service. J.B. Hunt's careers website includes positive testimonials from employees who graduated from the SkillBridge program and stayed on to work at the company.

Penske, a large transportation services company, forged an extensive partnership with the military community.[15] The company was recently designated a top 25 employer of veterans by Military.com and publicized the honor by issuing a news release. Penske's job postings are searchable by military occupational specialty (MOS) code, alphanumeric identifiers used in the military to categorize job duties and responsibilities. Veterans can enter their MOS code and find jobs at Penske that align with their skillsets. Penske also conducts resume reviews, mock interview workshops, and transition seminars in partnership with the USO Transition Program, an organization that prepares service members for professional life outside the military. In addition, Penske's careers website highlights the company's "Veterans Business Resource Group," with chapters located across the country. The group

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13   For more information, see https://about.usps.com/careers/career-opportunities/students-graduates.htm.
14   Port of Baltimore, "New Era Academy: From High School to Rewarding Careers," May 13, 2022, https://www.pobdirectory.com/article/new-era-academy-from-high-school-to-rewarding-careers.html.
15   Penske, "Penske Offers Jobs for Veterans Nationwide," https://penske.jobs/veterans/.

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is open to all veterans at Penske and is meant to provide opportunities for networking, mentorship, and community outreach, while supporting business development. While the Postal Service did not mention partnerships with the Department of Veterans Affairs to the OIG, the VA website sometimes highlights job opportunities at USPS, which employs more than 70,000 veterans.[16]

Participating in Recruiting Events and Hosting Informational Sessions

Participating in recruiting events, such as career fairs, or hosting informational sessions to discuss career

opportunities with potential job candidates are good ways for organizations to build their talent pipelines. Some organizations, including the Postal Service, coordinate and keep track of their recruitment events in electronic calendars or other platforms (See Box 1). Doing so can help organizations identify geographic areas with too many or too few recruiting events and make it easier to determine whether recruiting events are translating into applications and new hires.

Box 1: Keeping Track of Recruitment Initiatives

To keep track of upcoming recruiting events the Postal Service plans to attend, local HR teams document them in an internal calendar at least two weeks in advance. Information entered into the calendar includes the event type (for example, a job fair), event name, date, and location. The calendar provides visibility into the Postal Service's recruitment activity across the country, and it enables the agency to pinpoint locations where few events have been scheduled.

Similar to the Postal Service's internal recruitment calendar, the Department of Homeland Security built a tool called Strategic Marketing, Outreach, and Recruiting Engagement, or SMORE, to help keep track of its recruitment activities in real-time.* When a DHS component signs up to participate in a recruitment event, it enters information into SMORE, including the event's date, location, target audience (e.g., veterans), and type (e.g., a career fair). After the event has concluded, components enter additional information, including the cost of the event and how many people attended. The tool uses drop-down response options, when possible, to limit data entry errors and standardize responses. Data is visualized in dashboards, shedding light on each DHS component's recruitment activity over time (for example, SMORE can show how many career fairs the Secret Service attended in fiscal year 2024 with an audience comprised of students). The tool can also facilitate collaboration between DHS components. For example, one component might notice that another is scheduled to participate in a recruitment event nearby and ask to join.

* Partnership for Public Service, "A Time For Talent," August 2020, https://ourpublicservice.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/A-Time-for-Talent.pdf, p.12.

<u>Job Fairs</u>

The Postal Service participates in job fairs, including more than 1,500 events at "vital offices" in FY 2024 — locations with significant overtime. However, these events yielded only 3,262 applicants. The Postal Service's hiring events vary in size and setting, ranging from local post offices and plants to larger community venues. While the agency attends some job fairs that are hosted by third parties and

include other participants, most are organized by the Postal Service for itself exclusively.[17]

Some organizations the OIG researched host large, high-visibility events. For example, the Department of Homeland Security organizes recruiting events called "DHS Expos." Many DHS components participate, and HR staff are onsite to engage with attendees. Attendees can apply for jobs, have an interview,

16   VA News, "USPS is hiring nationwide, Veterans and families get preference," August 17, 2021, https://news.va.gov/93330/usps-is-hiring-nationwide-veterans-and-families-get-preference/.
17   The Postal Service stated that it recently had success recruiting at state fairs.

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submit fingerprints, and receive a tentative job offer in a single day. HR and personnel security are on-site to assess candidate qualifications and initiate background screening. To showcase its work, DHS brings high-profile items to the events such as drones, ATVs, and the presidential limousine. The events are held twice a year over a period of two days. The agency advertises the DHS Expos beforehand, and a recent event had 8,000 registrants and long lines to enter the facility. See Figure 4.

Figure 4: A 2024 DHS Expo Event

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Online Informational Sessions

Hosting online informational sessions where attendees can learn about an organization and its work is another common practice among the organizations the OIG researched, including the Postal Service. Amazon hosts online informational sessions to recruit new employees. One session, aimed at recruiting warehouse employees, offers participants the opportunity to learn about part-time, full-time, and seasonal roles, receive tips on how to apply for jobs, get an overview of Amazon's employee benefits package, and hear from current employees about their experiences.[18]

While social media is one way to advertise job fairs and online informational sessions, some organizations the OIG researched, including Amazon, Austrian Post, Royal Mail, and UPS, also list upcoming recruitment events on their websites. Doing so can help job candidates easily find events and determine when an organization will be recruiting nearby. While the Postal Service promotes its recruitment events on social media, it does not currently maintain a centralized calendar of events on its career website.

Reaching Job Candidates Through Social Media Without Neglecting Traditional Mediums

Social media is a good way for organizations to connect with active job seekers as well as passive candidates who are not actively looking but may be open to new opportunities. The U.S. Postal Service and many other organizations the OIG researched use social media to advertise their job openings and promote upcoming hiring events, such as career fairs. For example, the Postal Service, UPS, and other organizations embed links on their social media channels that take viewers to their hiring websites.

Authentic Social Media Content

Some organizations discovered that posting content on social media that comes across as authentic is an effective way to connect with audiences and ultimately attract job candidates. For example, DHL found that many Gen Z and Millennials prioritize entertaining content and want to feel a part of something. To form more enduring connections with its audience, DHL tries to "de-brand" its social media posts. That means sharing content that is personal and relatable, makes heavy use of videos and imagery, and minimizes overt branding. This approach makes content feel more authentic and approachable, while still aligning with the company's brand identity.[19]

Posten Bring, Norway's post, told the OIG that work-related content its employees post on their personal social media accounts attracts a high level of engagement. For example, employees post content on their own initiative, including videos in which they talk about their day, or inspiring photos out on the road, such as the sun setting behind their truck. For its part, the Postal Service actively maintains two Instagram accounts, including one focused on career opportunities and another for general public engagement. The USPS careers account primarily features job fair announcements accompanied by

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18   The Department of Homeland Security also hosts online informational sessions, and some include breakout rooms where participants can wait in line to speak one-on-one with a recruiter. To accommodate people with 9-5 jobs, DHS holds some informational sessions in the evening.
19   DHL, "The Art of (De)branding Social Media," https://www.dpdhl-brands.com/en/group/the-art-of-debranding-social-media.

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images of employees doing their jobs. The main USPS account includes a variety of content, such as videos and images highlighting community outreach, personal stories related to mail, and practical mailing advice.

Traditional Mediums

While recruiting on social media can be an effective way to attract talent, not everyone is regularly online. To reach these people, the Postal Service posts on outdoor digital displays, such as bulletin boards, and advertises in magazines and newspapers. In smaller, rural parts of the country, DHL might publicize its job openings at local venues such as supermarkets, while its advertising is more heavily digital in large metropolitan areas. Similarly, Austrian Post told the OIG that it complements its online outreach with advertisements in newspapers and on flyers in the countryside.

Table 2: Summary: How Organizations in the Public and Private Sectors Recruit Proactively

Best practices at organizations the OIG researched	Does USPS implement the best practice?
Use rank-and-file employees to supplement the HR workforce.	Yes, for a small subset of employees, through the "USPS Zone" social media advocacy program.
Partner with other organizations (e.g., schools, military, downsizing businesses).	Yes, attends academic job fairs, partners with military transition organizations, and works with outlets that connect USPS with veterans.
Participate in recruiting events/host informational sessions.	Yes, participates in job fairs, including hosting more than 1,500 events at "vital offices" in FY 2024.
Use social media and traditional mediums to advertise jobs and hiring events.	Yes, embeds links to its hiring website on social media; advertises jobs on bulletin boards, and in magazines and newspapers.

Hiring: Adopting Rapid and Effective Hiring Practices and Providing a Positive Candidate Experience

After recruiting job applicants, organizations must select the best candidates from the applicant pool as quickly and efficiently as possible. A lengthy hiring process can frustrate candidates and cause them to drop out prematurely to take another job. At the same time, a less rigorous process that results in lower quality hires is costly for the employer and can negatively impact other employees. Balancing these priorities is the ultimate challenge for employers when recruiting and hiring job applicants.

The U.S. Postal Service's Hiring Process and Ongoing Challenges

The Process

Traditionally, applicants for USPS pre-career positions applied through the Postal Service's online platform, called eCareer. In 2024, the agency began to introduce a new Applicant Tracking System (ATS, see below for additional information) to replace eCareer, using it to hire mail handler assistants (MHA). At the end of May 2025, the Postal Service expanded its use of the ATS to city carrier assistant (CCA) and postal support employee (PSE) positions. Currently, candidates for rural carrier positions still apply for jobs on eCareer. Job announcements usually remain online for three to five days before closing. The steps in the hiring process are shown in Figure 5.[20]

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20 Regarding Veterans' preference in competitive federal hiring, veterans may be eligible for preference points that are added to a candidate's numerical rating. Preference points may result in a veteran scoring higher than non-veterans and therefore being selected for the position.

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Figure 5: Steps in the USPS Hiring Process

ONCE APPLICATIONS ARE COMPLETED AND SUBMITTED (STEPS 1-3) THE POSTAL SERVICE ASSESSES THEM (STEP 4). USPS SENDS CONDITIONAL JOB OFFERS (STEP 5) TO SELECTED APPLICANTS, WHO COMPLETE ADDITIONAL STEPS (6 AND 7) AND SELECT THEIR START DATE (STEP 8).

1. Apply for an open position on the ATS
2. Complete candidate assessment
3. Submit information for motor vehicle records check, if applicable
4. Combine assessment scores with Veteran's preference points
5. Selected applicants receive conditional job offer
6. Applicant accepts or declines offer within 3 days
7. Complete background screening consent form, medical suitability questionnaire, and schedule fingerprinting
8. Confirm employment and select start date in ATS

Applicant Responsibility
USPS Responsibility

Source: USPS.

Improvements and Ongoing Challenges

In recent years, the Postal Service reduced its time to hire. A 2024 OIG audit found that from FYs 2021 to 2023, time to hire decreased from 49 days to 32 days.[21] The Postal Service achieved this reduction by eliminating interviews for most entry-level, pre-career bargaining positions and centralizing the hiring process.[22] In addition, the Postal Service switched from in-person to virtual assessments and began allowing new employees to start work with an interim background screening.

Although time to hire decreased significantly, data suggests that there are additional opportunities to improve the hiring process. An OIG analysis found that the Postal Service hired 128,852 pre-career applicants in FY 2023 and that 18 percent did not show up for orientation or their first day of work.[23] This indicates that the Postal Service is losing applicants after they have completed all necessary screening but before their first day of work. While the OIG does not have data on why these applicants did not show up to work, strengthening the candidate experience, including timely and clear communication with applicants, improved application processes, a quick hiring process, and expeditious onboarding can reduce the likelihood that applicants drop out of the hiring process prematurely.

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21   Time to hire is measured from the date the job posting closed to the date an employee's personnel and payroll records are created. USPS OIG, *Postal Service Hiring Practices,* Report No. 23-145-R24, April 24, 2024, https://www.uspsoig.gov/reports/audit-reports/postal-service-hiring-practices, p.6.
22   Maintenance employees, motor vehicle operators, tractor trailer operators, and career employees are still required to participate in a job interview.
23   USPS OIG, *Postal Service Hiring Practices*, Report No. 23-145-R24, April 24, 2024, https://www.uspsoig.gov/reports/audit-reports/postal-service-hiring-practices, p. 11.

Addressing Hiring Challenges

Large employers the OIG examined, as well as the Postal Service, are working to improve their hiring processes. This includes making the process faster, improving the candidate experience, and using data to strengthen talent acquisition.

One-Stop Shop Hiring Events to Hire Quickly and At Scale

Among the organizations the OIG researched, some use job fairs to recruit large numbers of potential employees at once. Like the Postal Service, these job fairs often have tools to help expedite candidate screening and hiring, but unlike the Postal Service, some organizations make tentative job offers at the events.

For example, the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) held a hiring event targeting bus drivers.[24] At the event, MTA conducted bus driver testing, initiated background screening, and made conditional job offers. In addition, current MTA bus drivers attended the event to answer applicant questions.

Hiring events like these can reduce the time to hire because applicants complete multiple steps of the hiring process at one time. A shorter process can reduce the risk of applicants dropping out to take another offer.

The Postal Service coordinates jobs fairs across the country where the agency has a need for workers. To streamline the application and screening processes, staff bring laptops and fingerprint scanners to some of these hiring events. Candidates can use the laptops to apply for jobs and complete assessments. However, the Postal Service told the OIG it cannot make job offers to applicants at these events, given the need to adjudicate Veterans' preference.

Multimedia Content Can Educate Applicants About the Job

Organizations can convey job expectations in different ways. For example, candidates can learn about the job's realities during an interview. Videos can also be an effective way to communicate with applicants, especially younger ones. Currently, the Postal Service requires applicants to watch a "realistic job preview" video as part of the online assessment process.

However, exit survey data from departing city carrier assistants, mail handler assistants, assistant rural carriers, and rural carrier associates revealed that in FY 2024, only 34 percent of these former employees said the job was what they expected it to be, and 45 percent said the job was more physically demanding than they anticipated. This data suggests that the Postal Service could strengthen how it prepares applicants by offering a more realistic view of the job. Given the wide variation in working conditions across facilities and regions of the country, tailoring job previews to reflect these differences may help align expectations and support retention.

In a survey of young drivers in the trucking industry, respondents reported that "day in the life" videos are an effective way to give applicants a realistic preview of a trucking career. Young drivers also said they valued transparency from their employer, including a career development timeline and clear descriptions of job expectations and requirements.[25] Employee testimonials, published on a company's career website, can also convey job expectations and development opportunities that may be available.

Videos can also help communicate information about the hiring process, which may encourage more applicants to finish their application, remain in the hiring process, and show up for the first day of work. While this information can also be communicated in writing, videos may be more aligned with how people consume information today. Australia Post includes an engaging, five-minute video on its jobs website that introduces each step of the hiring process, tells candidates what they can expect, and offers tips to be successful. The video includes information about how to complete a job application, what the interview process entails, how the screening and selection process works, and how to accept a job offer and prepare for the first day of work.[26] The Postal Service also includes videos showing job candidates how

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24 Maryland Transit Administration, "Maryland Transit Administration to Host Onsite Hiring Event on May 13 for Bus Operators," April 27, 2023, https://www.mta.maryland.gov/articles/376.

25 American Transportation Research Institute (ATRI), "Integrating Younger Adults into Trucking Careers," https://truckingresearch.org/2022/07/new-atri-research-outlines-best-practices-for-recruiting-training-and-retaining-younger-adults-in-trucking/ July 2022, pp. 23-24.

26 The video can be found at https://jobs.auspost.com.au/en_GB/careers/FindYourPlace.

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to navigate its careers website and apply for an open position.[27]

Using Data and AI to Improve the Talent Acquisition Process

Effectively using data and AI can help organizations improve how they acquire new talent. For example, organizations can use data or AI to forecast their future hiring needs, identify the most effective ways to reach job seekers and conduct targeted outreach, and minimize the time between a job opening and a new employee starting work. Drawing on the best practices of other organizations, there may be opportunities for USPS to expand its use of data and AI to improve the hiring process.[28]

Feeding and Tracking the Talent Pipeline

Some organizations the OIG researched collect information about people who may be interested in applying for a job through a form on their website or at hiring events. Organizations can use this information to proactively engage with these individuals when they are ready to hire. In one example, UPS invites people who visit its career website to enter their contact information, geographic location, and the types of jobs they are interested in. When a relevant job becomes available, UPS sends an alert to the candidate.

Organizations also systematically track each job applicant as they move through the hiring process. For example, the logistics and warehousing company Americold monitors communication with each candidate, and tracks how long it has taken candidates to complete their interview, background investigation, and accept the job offer. If data shows that a step is taking longer than expected, the company can investigate the cause of the delay. Data is available for each facility, and it helps Americold understand how efficient its hiring process is, and where improvements might be needed. Americold also tracks where it encountered each applicant, such as a job fair. Doing so enables the company to make data-driven decisions about how to allocate its recruiting budget.

For its part, the Postal Service began using a new Candidate Relationship Management tool (CRM) in February 2025 that is expected to improve how the agency acquires new talent. According to the Postal Service, the CRM will provide evidence-based insights into how to recruit most effectively.

Using AI to Improve Hiring Efficiency

Some postal and logistics operators have already introduced data and AI solutions into their recruiting and hiring processes and are beginning to reap the benefits. For example, Dutch postal operator PostNL was receiving more applications for mail deliverer jobs than it could respond to in a timely manner, causing some candidates to drop out of the hiring process prematurely. To remedy the problem, the company introduced "Charlie," an AI-powered digital recruiter intended to assist the HR staff. Just one minute after a candidate applies for a job on PostNL's careers website, they receive a phone call or message on WhatsApp from Charlie. Charlie thanks the candidate for their application and asks some initial questions. For example, someone who applied to deliver the mail might be asked whether they have a driver's license. If the applicant answers the questions satisfactorily, Charlie will access a human HR employee's calendar and immediately schedule an interview with the applicant. If the applicant does not answer the questions satisfactorily, Charlie can move them into consideration for a different position than they applied to if it determines there is a better fit. Since Charlie was introduced in 2024, PostNL's recruitment costs declined, the time it took to schedule the first interview fell from four days to just half a day, and the share of candidates who dropped out prematurely shrank from nearly half to just 21 percent.[29]

In addition to facilitating the hiring process, AI can match current employees with new positions. For example, DHL uses artificial intelligence to identify current employees who might be a good fit for its open positions. Filling positions from within can be faster and cheaper than searching for candidates outside the organization. Additionally, making it easy

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27 The Postal Service also includes extensive written instructions on its careers website to assist job applicants.
28 The Postal Service told the OIG that its new candidate relationship management tool (CRM) will incorporate AI, and the agency established an AI steering committee, but is proceeding cautiously and deliberately with the adoption of AI to protect against negative outcomes.
29 For more information about PostNL's use of Charlie, see ScottyTechnologies.com, "AI Recruitment Showcase," https://scottytechnologies.com/ai-recruitment-showcase-2025-meet-the-cheeky-ai-changing-the-hiring-game/.

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for high-performing employees to advance within an organization can help with retention. DHL encourages employees to enter their skills in an app, which is powered by AI. Next, the app matches employees with open roles at the company that require the skills they possess. Employees also receive regular prompts to update their skills throughout their tenure at the company.

Table 3: Summary: Addressing Hiring Challenges

Best practices at organizations the OIG researched	Does USPS implement the best practice?
Host one-stop-shop hiring events to hire quickly and at scale.	Yes. Hosts hiring events where candidates can apply and get screened onsite; however, USPS does not make conditional job offers at these events.
Use multimedia to educate applicants about the job.	Yes, partially. Applicants must watch a "realistic job preview" video.
Use data and AI to improve the talent acquisition process.	Yes, partially. The new CRM is expected to incorporate AI, and provide evidence-based insights into how to recruit most effectively, but there may be opportunities to further leverage the use of AI.

Improving the Candidate Experience

Creating a positive and seamless experience for job candidates can help organizations achieve their hiring goals. A user-friendly application website encourages more applicants to complete the process, while timely and clear communication fosters confidence and keeps candidates engaged. By prioritizing transparency and responsiveness throughout the hiring process, organizations can reduce candidate attrition and attract top talent.

> In the United States, more than 60 percent of job applications were submitted on a mobile device in 2023.

A User-friendly Application Platform

At the Postal Service, applicants for pre-career positions traditionally applied through the eCareer platform. To understand the candidate experience using eCareer, the OIG reviewed the platform and compared it to those used by other large employers. The OIG found that the eCareer website experienced technological issues such as error messages and broken links, which extended the time required to complete applications compared to other organizations in our sample. Furthermore, while other companies provided timely responses or even conditional job offers within 24 hours, eCareer did not notify applicants of their status.

The Postal Service recognized the need to modernize its hiring platform to better align with the expectations of today's job candidates. In response, in 2021, the Postal Service started the process to replace eCareer. In 2024, USPS began piloting a new applicant tracking system (ATS) to hire mail handler assistants.[30] The Postal Service expects its ATS to make job searches more intuitive and streamline and expedite the hiring process, reducing manual tasks for both applicants and HR personnel. Recently, as discussed above, the Postal Service also began to require prospective postal support employees and city carrier assistants to apply on its new ATS, while candidates for pre-career rural carrier positions continue to apply on eCareer.[31]

Another way the ATS is expected to improve the candidate experience is by allowing people to apply for jobs on their mobile devices. Mobile-compatible job application platforms are becoming increasingly

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30   See the new applicant tracking system website: USPS careers, https://jobs.usps.com/applytohire.
31   The Postal Service plans to require prospective pre-career rural carriers to apply for jobs on the ATS at a later date.

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important for employers.[32] By one estimate, more than 60 percent of all job applications were submitted via a mobile device in 2023, with the number rising to 69 percent in the warehouse and logistics sectors.[33]

Other posts are taking steps to streamline the mobile application process, as well. For example, Austrian Post is appealing to Generation Z job seekers through a pilot program allowing applicants to scan a QR code and answer five questions, rather than upload a resume. The company evaluates each candidate's aptitude based on their answers and decides whether to advance them to the next stage of the hiring process. Additionally, Swiss Post instituted an initiative that allows applicants to apply for jobs via WhatsApp. Rather than submitting CVs, cover letters, and other common documents, candidates may choose to express their interest in a voice message.

Improving Communication with Candidates

The OIG found creative examples of organizations effectively communicating with applicants during the hiring process. Uncertainty over the status of their application can increase the likelihood of a candidate taking another job or losing interest in the position. For these reasons, organizations should proactively communicate with applicants to set expectations about the process and keep them engaged.

Multi-Channel Communication

Offering multiple or novel communication channels allows applicants to engage in whichever way works best for them. The U.S. Army recently updated its recruiting website to offer applicants various communication channels including live chat, texting, or requesting a phone call from a recruiter.[34]

The Postal Service's new ATS is also expected to enhance the agency's ability to communicate with applicants. For example, it will allow USPS to send text messages to job candidates during the hiring process, including to remind them to complete certain tasks.

Some organizations use technology to automate communication with applicants such as chatbots that answer candidates' questions and help them complete their job application. Union Pacific Railroad introduced a chatbot that provides applicants with 24/7 support so they can get responses to their questions outside of traditional business hours. In addition, FedEx introduced its "Olivia" chatbot on the company's careers page to assist job applicants. Royal Mail's chatbot "Penny" can answer a range of questions, including about the hiring process, the types of jobs that are available, and how much the different positions pay. The Postal Service told the OIG it currently does not have plans to introduce an AI chatbot on its careers website.

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32 A recent analysis from the U.S. Census Bureau found that more U.S. households own smartphones than a desktop or laptop computer – 90 percent compared to 81 percent. See U.S. Census Bureau, *Computer and Internet Use in the United States: 2021,* Report No. ACS-56, June 2024, https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/2024/demo/acs-56.pdf, p. 2.
33 Appcast, *2024 Recruitment Marketing Benchmark Report: U.S. Edition,* https://1859609.fs1.hubspotusercontent-na1.net/hubfs/1859609/FINAL%20CONTENT%20PDFS/Reports/%5BReport%5D%202024%20Recruitment%20Marketing%20Benchmark%20Report.pdf, pp. 29-30.
34 Anastasia Obis, "Army's new AI tool helps target qualified prospects," Federal News Network, September 24, 2024, https://federalnewsnetwork.com/army/2024/09/armys-new-ai-tool-helps-target-qualified-prospects.

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Table 4: Summary: Improving the Candidate Experience

Best practices at organizations the OIG researched	Provide a user-friendly application platform		Communicate effectively with candidates via multiple channels
How organizations implement the best practices	A user-friendly application platform	Mobile compatibility	Offer multi-channel communication options
Does USPS implement the best practices the same way?	Partially. The eCareer platform had broken links and longer application times. USPS is replacing it with a new applicant tracking system (ATS) to improve the process.	Partially. eCareer is not mobile compatible, but the new ATS is.	Partially. eCareer is not able to send text messages to candidates and does not use a chatbot like some organizations. The new ATS allows USPS to communicate with candidates via text message, but does not include a chatbot.

Onboarding: Providing A Positive Onboarding Experience to Boost Productivity and Improve Retention

Onboarding is an opportunity to introduce new employees to the organization, including its mission and values, and ensure new hires have the job-related knowledge they need to be full contributors. When onboarding is done well, new employees will feel prepared to do their job, and they will understand how their role advances the organization's mission. While the length of the onboarding process varies by organization, it includes the period after a job offer is accepted, the employee's first day, and some amount of time after that as the new employee adjusts to their role.[35] An employee's onboarding experience can leave a lasting impression: A Click Boarding study found that employees who are effectively onboarded are 58 percent more likely to stay at their organization for three or more years. However, a recent Gallup survey showed that just 12 percent of employees strongly agree that their organization does a great job onboarding new employees.

Onboarding Best Practices in the Public and Private Sectors

Standardization and Personalization When Onboarding New Employees

The Postal Service and many organizations the OIG researched are trying to standardize their onboarding processes. Doing so can help ensure that every employee receives the same high-quality experience, no matter their work unit or supervisor. At the same time, these organizations are also taking steps to make the onboarding experience more personal for new employees.

Standardizing Onboarding

In 2021, the Postal Service implemented an agency-wide strategy to boost pre-career retention, called the "511 Initiative." One part of the 511 Initiative focuses on improving pre-career onboarding. For example, the strategy calls for limiting employees' workhours during their first 90 days to help them acclimate, and conducting performance discussions with employees on days 30, 60, and 80. While a March 2025 OIG audit found that the 511 Initiative was unevenly implemented across the Postal Service, it also found that facilities that fully embraced the initiative had higher pre-career retention than facilities that did not.[36]

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35 U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *End to End Hiring Initiative*, March 2017, https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/human-capital-management/hiring-reform/reference/end-to-end-hiring-initiative.pdf, p. 44.
36 USPS OIG, *Pre-Career Retention Initiatives,* Report No. 24-131-R25, March 31, 2025, https://www.uspsoig.gov/reports/audit-reports/pre-career-retention-initiatives, pp. 4-5.

Providing the same orientation session for every new employee is another way that the Postal Service and other organizations have attempted to standardize onboarding. To familiarize new employees with the Postal Service, every new bargaining-level employee attends a session called "Welcome to the USPS: Universal Orientation" on their first day of work. The orientation is an eight-hour instructor-led course consisting of video presentations and in-class activities. It introduces employees to the Postal Service, and covers topics including workplace safety, ethics, benefits, time and attendance, and security of the mail.

Similarly, as part of its onboarding program, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security recently introduced "Ethos Training," a full day session centered on the organization's values that every new employee completes. Facilitators discuss the agency's values and emphasize how every employee plays a role in advancing the mission. The session concludes with employees taking the oath of office. BlueGrace Logistics also hosts an orientation session for new employees, but received feedback that it contained too many presentations. Younger employees especially struggled to remain engaged. In response, the company "gamified" its orientation session, replacing some presentations with group activities, including competitions with prizes. The company's executive team also speaks at every orientation to introduce themselves, welcome the new cohort, and answer their questions.

To bring uniformity to the way it onboards new employees and ensure every new hire has a good experience, Posten Bring created an onboarding checklist with a timeline for completing the tasks. To help managers stay current on the checklist, which spans a new employee's first six months on the job, Posten Bring's IT system sends automated "nudges" or reminders that a task is coming due.

DHL is also trying to make onboarding more standardized, including when new employees take training. The company believes that training educates new employees about its culture and

should occur as soon as possible. Similarly, to ensure its new employees have the training they need, BlueGrace Logistics developed e-learning options on topics including the company's history, how to use its systems, and short introductory videos about each part of its business.

At UPS, the company curated an onboarding FAQ section on its website for some positions, such as a warehouse worker, which is intended to provide new employees with all the information they need before their first day of work. Topics include what to wear, what documents to bring on the first day, and how UPS will communicate with the new hire prior to their start date. The onboarding FAQs ensure that everyone receives the same essential information.

Emphasizing the Personal Touch

To provide a better onboarding experience, the Postal Service and some organizations the OIG researched are making it more personal. After Postal Service candidates accept job offers but before their first day, some are invited to meet with management at the facility where they will work. The meet-and-greets give new hires an opportunity to learn more about job expectations, ask questions, and make sure the role will be a good fit before they come onboard. While the Postal Service encourages facility management to contact new hires before their first day, it is not a requirement, and a recent OIG audit found that not every facility does so.[37]

Some new Postal Service hires are also entitled to shadow a more experienced employee for a day. However, this process is collectively bargained and varies by craft. For example, new pre-career rural carriers are entitled to a ride-along with a more seasoned colleague, but new city carriers are not. The Postal Service also partnered with the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC), a labor union, to create a mentoring program that pairs newly hired pre-career city carrier assistants with more experienced city carriers. Finally, to boost retention, the Postal Service limited how many hours pre-career employees can work during their first 30 days (to help them acclimate) and requires supervisors to have

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37   USPS OIG, *Postal Service Hiring Practices*, Report No. 23-145-R24, April 24, 2024, https://www.uspsoig.gov/reports/audit-reports/postal-service-hiring-practices, p. 10.

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performance discussions with new pre-career hires during their first 30, 60, and 80 days.[38]

Like the Postal Service, other organizations the OIG researched have leveraged mentoring and peer support to make the onboarding experience more personal. For example, new employees at An Post

> "For [the younger] generation of talent, having someone to support and guide them is very helpful."

shadow a more-seasoned colleague for two weeks; PostNL, the Dutch post, added additional trainers to its facilities to guide new hires, and gradually increases the number of delivery stops on a new carrier's route to help them acclimate to their role; DHL tested an onboarding pilot that includes more touchpoints between supervisors and new hires, a buddy program, and a welcome kit with company paraphernalia; and the Employee Resource Group at BlueGrace Logistics meets regularly with new employees to gauge how they are adjusting to their jobs. At the municipal level, Golden Gate Transit, a public transportation system serving the San Francisco area, partnered with its union to create a bus operator mentorship program. Seasoned bus operators meet regularly with new bus operators, helping them develop soft skills and adjust to driving routes alone.[39] As one HR leader told the OIG, "For [the younger] generation of talent, having someone to support and guide them is very helpful."

Measuring Effectiveness and Making Improvements

Many organizations evaluate their onboarding processes and make changes when necessary. To identify what is working well and where improvements are needed, the Postal Service and other organizations the OIG researched survey new hires, and some also conduct focus groups. For example, as part of the 511 Initiative (discussed above), the Postal Service surveys some new hires about their onboarding experience. The survey helps to evaluate onboarding consistency and effectiveness across offices. New hires are asked whether they received a realistic job description before they were hired, were formally welcomed by management on their first day, received management's contact information for ongoing support, and completed safety training. The Postal Service also conducts site visits to gather feedback from new hires, and administers a "stay" survey to new employees within their first six months to gain insight into their job satisfaction.

For its part, BlueGrace Logistics surveys new employees after their week-long orientation to evaluate what they learned, how they felt about the programming, and what components the company should keep or change. Organizations also evaluate the talent acquisition process more broadly. Americold fields a six-question survey to hiring managers twice a year to gauge their satisfaction with the recruiting and hiring process and identify where improvements are needed. The survey asks hiring managers about their communication with the human resources team, and their satisfaction with the quality of the job candidates.

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38 An OIG audit in 2023 found that employees worked an excessive number of hours *after* the 30-day mark, and it discovered that supervisors did not always properly document the performance discussions. USPS OIG, *Postal Service Non-Career Turnover Follow-up*, Report Number 22-180-R23, April 18, 2023, https://www.uspsoig.gov/reports/audit-reports/postal-service-non-career-turnover-follow.

39 Transit Workforce Center, "Case Study: Golden Gate Transit & Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1575," https://www.transitworkforce.org/case-study-win-partnership-ca/.

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Table 5: Summary: Providing a Good Onboarding Experience to Boost Productivity and Improve Retention

Best practices at organizations the OIG researched	Implement standardization and personalization		Measure the effectiveness of onboarding and make improvements
How organizations implement the best practices	Standardize onboarding where appropriate to ensure every employee receives the same experience.	Emphasize the personal touch.	Conduct surveys and/or focus groups.
Does USPS implement the best practice the same way?	Partially. Every new employee attends the same orientation session on their first day. However, not every employee receives the same meet-and-greet, ride-along, and shadowing opportunities.	Partially. Varies by craft and facility, with some (but not all) offering meet-and-greets, ride-alongs, shadowing, and mentoring.	Yes. Surveys some new hires about their onboarding experience. New employees also complete a "stay" survey, which sheds light on their job satisfaction.

Conclusion

The Postal Service faces challenges in attracting enough pre-career applicants in certain areas to fill some open positions, and in retaining employees once they are hired. In addition, over half of the workforce will be eligible to retire within the next decade and, although labor needs may change over time, the Postal Service must be prepared to manage the potential turnover. A tight labor market and increasing competition for talent— especially as industries like warehousing and storage, and courier and messenger services expand— may intensify hiring challenges.

To address their hiring challenges, organizations the OIG reviewed are refining their recruitment, hiring, and onboarding processes. While the specific tools and methods vary across organizations, including the Postal Service, best practices include:

- **Establishing a Strong Employer Brand**: Position the organization as an employer of choice by creatively sharing its values and opportunities, highlighting how employees can contribute to the mission and public good, and promoting a comprehensive total rewards package.

- **Adopting a Multi-Channel Recruitment Strategy**: Proactively engage potential candidates through strategic partnerships (academia, downsizing businesses, or the military community), targeted recruiting events, effective use of social media, and leveraging current employees to support HR efforts.

- **Accelerating and Improving Selection**: Improve hiring by hosting one-stop-shop hiring events, using engaging multimedia and digital tools to inform candidates about the role, and employing data and AI to target applicants and evaluate success.

- **Enhancing the Candidate Experience**: Simplify the application process with an easy-to-use platform and maintain consistent, transparent communication throughout the hiring journey.

- **Boosting Retention with Effective Onboarding**: Standardize onboarding processes when appropriate, while incorporating personal touches to help new hires understand expectations and adjust successfully.

- **Leveraging Technology for Talent Acquisition**: Utilize advanced tools like applicant tracking systems, data analytics, and artificial intelligence to identify, target, and engage candidates efficiently and effectively.

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The Postal Service has already adopted several talent acquisition best practices that align with those used by comparable organizations, such as international postal operators and shipping and logistics companies. USPS stated it is actively working to enhance its recruitment, hiring, and onboarding processes to address existing challenges. Its DFA 2.0 plan emphasizes modernizing the hiring process and improving the new employee experience by refining orientation and better engaging with new hires. In particular, the introduction of the new applicant tracking system (ATS) is expected to significantly enhance the candidate experience. In the near term, given the federal government's ongoing effort to downsize its workforce, the Postal Service could strengthen recruitment activity in parts of the country with many federal employees, where it has a hiring need.

While USPS uses these practices to fill all types of positions, they are particularly important for filling the most critical gaps in the Postal Service's labor force – pre-career positions. By optimizing and expanding the use of these practices, the chances of viable job candidates failing to submit an application or dropping out of the process prematurely can be minimized.

The USPS is unique in its scale, complexity, and the demanding nature of its work. However, as it continues to refine and develop its strategies to improve talent acquisition, there are valuable lessons to be learned from the practices of other organizations. While not every organization highlighted in this white paper is directly comparable to the Postal Service, their best practices can nevertheless inform how USPS recruits, hires, and onboards new employees. Several organizations are currently more advanced in some new areas, such as using AI to support hiring practices, and communicating job expectations realistically to applicants. Their experiences offer valuable insights. Actively monitoring market trends — particularly in relation to incorporating technology into its processes — could help further optimize the Postal Service's talent acquisition efforts.

Appendices

Appendix A: Additional Information

Objective(s), Scope, and Methodology

Objective

The objective of this white paper was to benchmark the recruitment and hiring processes of public and private sector organizations to identify best practices and insights for the U.S. Postal Service.

Scope

This white paper focuses on the recruitment, hiring, and onboarding practices of the U.S. Postal Service and other public and private sector organizations. Regarding the Postal Service, the focus of this paper is on the agency's pre-career bargaining level, craft employees.

Methodology

The OIG relied on several methods to achieve our objective.

Desk Research

To learn about the Postal Service's recruiting, hiring, and onboarding practices, we reviewed prior OIG reports and other publicly available information. We also submitted questions to the Postal Service for written responses.

To identify recruiting, hiring, and onboarding best practices at other public and private sector organizations, we reviewed material produced by federal agencies, private sector companies, management consultancies, good government organizations, industry peers, and media outlets. Additionally, the OIG contracted with The Segal Group, Inc. to compile a list of organizations similar to the Postal Service on some criteria and conduct research on those organizations' recruiting, hiring, and onboarding practices.

Interviews with Experts

To supplement our desk research about the Postal Service's recruiting, hiring, and onboarding practices, we interviewed members of the agency's human resources leadership team. To learn about best practices in the public and private sectors, we conducted interviews with the following organizations:

- Americold
- An Post (Irish post)
- Austrian Post
- BlueGrace Logistics
- DHL Express
- General Services Administration
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
- Posten Bring (Norwegian post)
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- U.S. Department of the Interior
- U.S. Department of State
- U.S. Government Publishing Office.

The OIG selected these organizations to interview because they are similar to the Postal Service on some criteria, or they have a reputation for recruiting, hiring and/or onboarding employees effectively.

The inspection was conducted in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation.

Prior Coverage

Title	Objective	Report Number	Final Report Date	Monetary Impact
Pre-Career Retention Initiatives	To assess the effectiveness of the Postal Service's national and local initiatives to improve the pre-career employee experience and retention.	24-131-R25	March 31, 2025	$0
Examining Trends in the Postal Service's Workforce Composition	To show how the size of the Postal Service's workforce has changed over the last five fiscal years between 2019-2023. To determine whether the Postal Service is experiencing staffing shortages and identify the workforce segments and the geographic locations where shortages may exist.	RISC-RI-24-007	August 15, 2024	$0
Postal Service Hiring Practices	To assess the Postal Service's hiring practices for bargaining unit employees.	23-145-R24	April 24, 2024	$0
Postal Service's Non-Career Employee Turnover Follow-Up	To assess the Postal Service's ongoing actions to reduce non-career employee turnover rates.	22-180-R23	April 18, 2023	$0
Peak Season Hiring	To assess whether the U.S. Postal Service effectively hired bargaining employees for the peak season periods 2019 through 2021.	20-316-R21	September 23, 2021	$0
First-Line Supervisor Recruitment and Retention	To assess whether the Postal Service is effectively hiring and retaining first-line supervisors.	19SMG008HR000-R20	April 13, 2020	$0
Effectiveness of the Postal Service's Efforts to Reduce Non-Career Employee Turnover	To assess the U.S. Postal Service's effectiveness in reducing non-career employee turnover and evaluate underlying reasons for non-career employee turnover.	19POG001SAT000-R20	February 12, 2020	$0

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Appendix B: Career Websites of Foreign Posts and the Postal Service

The OIG reviewed the career websites of a sample of foreign posts that, like the U.S. Postal Service, derive a majority of their revenue from mail and parcels.

	Welcome video	Employee testimonials	Publicizes awards	Emphasizes mission and/ or the public good	Promotes non-salary benefits	Promotes development opportunities	Promotes job flexibility	Publicizes upcoming recruitment events	Chatbot
An Post (Ireland)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Australia Post	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		
Austrian Post	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Canada Post		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
DHL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Poczta Polska (Poland)		✓			✓				
PostNL (Netherlands)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		
Royal Mail (UK)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
U.S. Postal Service		✓		✓	✓	✓			

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UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

July 17, 2025

MARK TASKY
DEPUTY ASSISTANT DIRECTOR GENERAL
RESEARCH AND INSIGHTS SOLUTION CENTER

SUBJECT: Management Response: Benchmarking Hiring Strategies: Insights for the Postal Service's Pre-Career Hiring Practices – White Paper (2024RISC005)

After conducting a thorough review of the OIG's Benchmarking Hiring Strategies report titled "Insights for the Postal Services' Pre-Career Hiring Practices," we have found the OIG's insights align with the research and benchmarking efforts previously undertaken by our organization. In recent years, the Postal Service has dedicated significant resources and funding to enhance its hiring policies & processes, including both redesigning its processes and upgrading the enabling hiring systems. Notably, the deployment of our new Applicant Tracking System (ATS) and Candidate Relationship Management Tool (CRM) has resulted in a substantial improvement in the applicant experience and a significant reduction in the time required for hiring procedures.

It is important to highlight that our commitment to process enhancement and technological advancements have been underway for years; the Postal Service prides itself on the hiring improvements – working within the existing constraints of our legacy systems – while deploying the new ATS. We continue to balance short-term and long-term improvements, which is noteworthy and a testament to our ability to successfully achieve our objectives as we continue to deploy additional phases of the ATS and actively explore further enhancements in both process efficiency and technological capabilities. While the report references various private industry organizations, foreign Posts, and other US Government entities, it is crucial to note that the lack of benchmarked data related to organizational size, budget, employee demographics, and other key metrics limits the direct comparability of their practices with the unique scope and employee requirements of the Postal Service.

Furthermore, the report outlines several "best practices" examples, many of which are already integrated into our existing hiring processes, while others may not align with the specific needs and standards of the Postal Service. It is essential to acknowledge that practices suitable for industries like fast food may not be directly applicable to the Postal Service, given our paramount commitment to maintaining public trust and ensuring thorough candidate vetting, particularly concerning background checks and driving histories.

Additionally, the report highlights various incentives employed by private companies, ranging from free meal offerings to tuition assistance programs. It is pertinent to mention that benefits provided by the Postal Service are subject to collective bargaining agreements and cost restrictions, and while these incentives are referenced in the report, a comprehensive analysis of the return on investment derived from such programs is not presented.

Recognizing the imperative of leveraging cutting-edge technology, the Postal Service acknowledges the mention of Artificial Intelligence (AI) utilization in the hiring process within the report. Leveraging AI in the human capital space is particularly sensitive; with the ongoing deployment of the ATS and CRM, the Postal Service will have the ability to explore leveraging AI

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to strengthen the marketing and recruitment aspects of its hiring processes. It is critical that the Postal Service is mindful of the risks associated with leveraging AI when it comes to candidate identification and selection. As we explore the potential applications of AI in our operations, including hiring procedures, amidst the ongoing deployment of new technologies such as the ATS and CRM, we are committed to ensuring efficiency and responsibility in the procurement and implementation of new systems and enhancements.
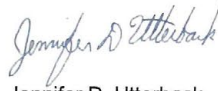
Moreover, it is crucial to emphasize that the OIG's report predominantly focuses on the hiring process for our non-career employees, whereas the Postal Service maintains distinct hiring strategies and processes for recruiting skilled professionals such as mechanics, drivers, and other specialized positions.

The OIG concluded "The Postal Service has already adopted several talent acquisition best practices that align with those used by comparable organizations, such as international postal operators and shipping and logistics companies.". The Postal Service agrees with this conclusion and will continue to review and revise its hiring processes and technology as needed.

In conclusion, the OIG's recognition of the Postal Service's alignment with talent acquisition best practices utilized by comparable organizations, including international postal operators and logistics companies, is duly acknowledged. Moving forward, the Postal Service remains dedicated to the continual review and refinement of its hiring processes and technological infrastructure to uphold operational excellence and meet evolving organizational needs effectively.

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