

washingtonpost.com

Looking for Quite a Few Good Men and Women

By Stephen Barr
Tuesday, July 10, 2007; D04

Uncle Sam, the nation's largest employer, is gearing up for a hiring binge.

Over the next two years, federal agencies expect to hire nearly 193,000 new workers in almost every occupational field, according to a report from the Partnership for Public Service, a nonprofit group that urges young Americans to consider careers in government.

More than 83,000 of the jobs are expected to be filled at Defense and Homeland Security as part of the continuing effort to secure the nation from terrorism.

Agencies also will be hiring in medicine and public health, accounting and auditing, engineering, science, computers, program management and administration.

"The most striking feature to me is the breadth of need," said *Max Stier*, president of the partnership. "You aren't seeing three, four or five agencies projecting hiring needs; it is across the board."

The hiring is being driven by the impending retirements of thousands of federal employees and by the intensified homeland security efforts after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the report said. Nearly one-third of the 1.6 million full-time members of the federal workforce are expected to retire or resign in the next five years, with large numbers of baby boomers departing, to create staffing shortages.

The baby-boom retirements come at a time when the nation's labor pool is growing at a slower pace than in previous decades. While immigrants will fill a larger share of the nation's jobs, a significant number of them will not be available for federal service because almost all government jobs require citizenship.

Federal agencies "are not going to be fishing alone" in the national labor pool, Stier said. "They are going to be facing competition from the private sector for the best talent."

As in recent years, the government will be recruiting from the ranks of college graduates and workers who are seeking a mid-career change. More than half of federal employees work in professional, management and business-related occupations, compared with 29 percent in the private sector, according to the report.

To compile the hiring projections, the Partnership for Public Service surveyed 34 federal agencies and used employment data collected by the [Office of Personnel Management](#) and the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#). The report summarizes hiring plans through September 2009 for what agencies call "mission critical" jobs. It does not include data from intelligence agencies such as the CIA.

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According to the report, agencies intend to do much of their hiring in security, protection, compliance and enforcement, hoping to fill 62,863 such positions. Occupations include criminal investigator, inspector, police officer, prison guard, airport screener, customs and Border Patrol officer, immigration agent and intelligence analyst.

The [Department of Homeland Security](#) plans to hire more than 15,000 Customs and Border Protection officers and Border Patrol agents and 22,000 airport screeners in the next three years. The department also is trying to fill more than 100 vacant political and senior executive slots.

Defense, Justice, Treasury and Homeland Security and the [Nuclear Regulatory Commission](#) plan to fill 3,670 intelligence analyst positions and are looking for people with proficiency in certain foreign languages.

In medicine and public health, the government expects to bring aboard 35,350 new hires. According to the report, the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) plans to hire more than 28,000 employees through 2009 to staff its network of hospitals.

Accountants, auditors, budget analysts and contracting specialists also will be in demand, the report said. The [Defense Department](#) projects that it will hire 6,841 contracting specialists, and the [Internal Revenue Service](#) plans to hire 4,600 tax examiners.

Engineers of all types will be sought by the departments of Defense, Transportation and Energy and [NASA](#) and the NRC. [The Pentagon](#) estimates that it will hire 7,652 engineers.


The threat of bioterrorism is driving demand for scientists. The [Agriculture Department](#) projects hiring 2,462 employees in biological sciences.

Other agencies with big hiring plans include the [Federal Aviation Administration](#) (more than 4,300 controllers), the [Patent and Trademark Office](#) (more than 1,500 patent examiners) and the [State Department](#) (nearly 2,000 to handle increased demand for passports and visas), the report said.

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