U.S. Department of Commerce
Office of Human Resources Management
Office of Talent Programs

Strategic Workforce Planning Guide

Introduction
This Strategic Workforce Planning (SWP) Guide provides a streamlined, Department of Commerce (DOC)-aligned framework that bureaus can use to identify workforce risks, plan for emerging talent needs, and build a mission-ready workforce.

Purpose
The purpose of this guide is to outline the essential steps, templates, and best practices needed to assess current workforce capacity, define the desired future workforce, and execute talent strategies that ensure mission success.

Step 1 — Determine Strategic Direction
Establish a strong planning foundation by validating mission objectives, assessing the current workforce, and identifying internal and external workforce conditions.

1.1 Confirm Mission Objectives
- Review bureau and DOC strategic plan
- Identify mission priorities that affect workforce needs
- Engage leadership for validation
- Document alignment and mission implications

1.2 Assess Current Workforce
- Review staffing levels, demographics, and structure
- Identify MCOs and critical roles
- Evaluate retirement risk and attrition patterns
- Summarize findings in visuals or dashboards

1.3 Conduct Environmental Scan
- Analyze internal workforce trends
- Assess external talent markets
- Identify opportunities and risks
- Document a concise environmental scan summary

Best Practices for Step 1.1	Best Practices for Step 1.2	Best Practices for Step 1.3
• Conduct leadership interviews to verify emerging priorities • Connect goals to workforce impacts early to guide data collection • Align workforce discussions with budget cycles • Use a standardized template to document objectives for consistency	• Use HRStat and internal dashboards to ensure consistent data sources • Include competency data where available—not just job titles • Use a standard workforce baseline sheet to support comparisons • Validate data insights with program leadership for accuracy	• Use BLS, OPM FedScope, and regional labor data for validation • Consider workforce impacts of technology, automation, and policy shifts • Map out internal vs. external supply for critical occupations • Document at least 3 opportunities and 3 risks for decision-makers

Step 2 — Plan for the Desired Future Workforce

Define the workforce needed to meet mission requirements and outline strategies to close workforce gaps.

2.1 Define the Desired Future Workforce
- Identify ideal future workforce size and structure
- Determine critical future skills
- Identify emerging mission needs and roles
- Prioritize areas requiring intervention

2.2 Create Workforce Action Plan
- Identify recruitment, development, and retention strategies
- Break strategies into actionable steps
- Define timelines and milestones
- Build in monitoring and reporting mechanisms

2.3 Assign Stakeholder Roles
- Identify leaders, HR partners, hiring managers, and L&D leads
- Assign responsibilities clearly
- Establish governance and reporting schedules
- Document communication pathways

Best Practices for Step 2.1	Best Practices for Step 2.2	Best Practices for Step 2.3
• Use scenario-based planning (e.g., low/medium/high demand) • Integrate DEIA and modernization priorities • Consider automation and digital transformation impacts • Involve cross-functional partners to refine future state	• Use SMART criteria for all actions • Link strategies to measurable outcomes • Include quick wins alongside long-term initiatives • Align actions with bureau budget forecasts	• Use a RACI model to clarify ownership • Embed accountability in performance plans when appropriate • Hold monthly or quarterly planning checkpoints • Ensure documented roles are accessible to all partners

Step 3 — Execute Strategies and Monitor Progress

Implement workforce actions, monitor results, and evaluate effectiveness to support long-term workforce readiness.

3.1 Track and Communicate Progress
- Establish reporting cadence
- Track progress using dashboards or trackers
- Identify barriers and corrective actions
- Communicate with stakeholders regularly

3.2 Establish Key Performance Indicators
- Set KPIs aligned to strategic goals
- Measure gap closure, bench strength, retention, and hiring metrics
- Track workforce readiness measures
- Link KPIs to action plan outcomes

3.3 Evaluate Success and Refresh Strategy
- Compare results to workforce goals
- Collect feedback from HR and mission leaders
- Identify areas for improvement
- Refresh strategy when priorities shift

Best Practices for Step 3.1	Best Practices for Step 3.2	Best Practices for Step 3.3
• Use a standard workforce action tracker • Report progress with both data and narrative insights • Highlight early wins to build momentum • Maintain transparency with leadership and stakeholders	• Limit KPIs to the most mission-relevant indicators • Use dashboards to display trends visually • Validate KPI meaning with leadership • Revisit KPIs annually based on mission changes	• Conduct an annual workforce planning review session • Capture lessons learned in a shared repository • Adjust strategies based on data, not assumptions

Conclusion

This condensed guide supports DOC bureaus in building a mission-aligned, data-informed workforce plan that remains flexible, sustainable, and responsive to evolving mission demands. When applied consistently, this framework strengthens bureau readiness, enhances talent pipelines, and supports the Department's long-term strategic goals.