Workforce Prioritization & Annual Staffing Plan Framework

Purpose

The Department of Commerce's mission spans economic growth, innovation, trade enforcement, environmental intelligence, and data stewardship. Delivering on these responsibilities requires a workforce that is strategically aligned, fiscally responsible, and responsive to evolving national priorities.

This framework provides DOC bureaus with a **consistent, flexible approach** for developing Annual Staffing Plans that:

- Prioritize mission-critical positions
- Align hiring decisions with funding realities
- Support Administration and Departmental priorities
- Strengthen workforce continuity and resilience

Guiding Principles (DOC-Specific)

1. **Mission First** – Staffing decisions must clearly support statutory responsibilities, public-facing services, and Departmental priorities.
2. **Bureau Flexibility within Departmental Consistency** – Bureaus retain discretion to reflect unique missions while using a shared DOC framework.
3. **Data-Informed Decisions** – Workforce analytics and evidence guide prioritization, not anecdote alone.
4. **Transparency & Defensibility** – Hiring priorities must be clear, documented, and explainable to leadership and oversight bodies.
5. **Continuous Review** – Staffing plans are living tools, reviewed and refined throughout the fiscal year.

Staffing Prioritization Framework

Step 1: Establish the Staffing Baseline

Each bureau begins by compiling positions that are **funded or reasonably executable** within the current fiscal environment.

Baseline inputs include:

- Funded vacancies and approved new positions
- Positions likely to be funded under a Continuing Resolution
- Anticipated attrition (retirements, resignations, internal movement)
- Known workforce risk areas (e.g., STEM, IT, acquisition, economists)

This baseline creates a realistic starting point and avoids planning against unfunded or speculative requirements.

Step 2: Categorize Positions by DOC Role Type

To support Department-wide clarity, positions should be grouped into one of two categories:

Mission Enablement Roles
Positions that:

- Directly deliver on DOC's statutory or mission outcomes
- Support Administration or Departmental priorities
- Are essential to public safety, economic competitiveness, scientific integrity, or data delivery

Examples: scientists, economists, trade enforcement specialists, statisticians, cybersecurity professionals

Operational Sustainment Roles
Positions that:

- Enable mission delivery through enterprise services
- Maintain compliance, internal controls, and continuity
- Support bureau and Department-wide operations

Examples: HR, budget, acquisition, IT infrastructure, facilities, legal support

Step 3: Prioritize Using a DOC Importance–Urgency Matrix

Bureaus prioritize positions using an importance–urgency lens:

Quadrant 1 – High Importance / High Urgency	Quadrant 2 – High Importance / Not Urgent	Quadrant 3 – High Urgency / Lower Importance	Quadrant 4 – Low Urgency / Low Importance
Mission-essential roles tied to immediate delivery, safety, compliance, or statutory deadlines.	Strategic roles needed to sustain future capability, succession pipelines, or modernization efforts.	Roles driven by short-term workload surges, deadlines, or external demands.	Positions with flexible timing and limited near-term mission impact.

DOC staffing plans should primarily focus on **Quadrants 1 and 3**, while deliberately sequencing **Quadrant 2** roles to prevent future mission degradation.

Step 4: Align Priorities with Funding and Scenarios

Once priorities are set, bureaus integrate:

- Estimated costs (salary, benefits, onboarding)
- Budget execution timing
- Funding uncertainty scenarios

Where resources are insufficient, **forced-ranking discussions**—in partnership with HR and budget—help surface the most critical hires and document tradeoffs. This strengthens accountability and supports Departmental review.

Step 5: Quarterly Review and Adjustment

DOC staffing plans should be reviewed **quarterly** to:

- Remove filled positions
- Adjust priorities as mission needs shift
- Reassess assumptions as funding becomes clearer
- Address unexpected attrition or emerging requirements

This cadence aligns with DOC's governance structure and ensures plans remain relevant and actionable.

Step 6: Anchor to Strategic Human Capital Plans (SHCPs)

Annual Staffing Plans must align with bureau and Departmental **Strategic Human Capital Plans**, ensuring near-term hiring supports long-term workforce outcomes.

SHCP alignment helps address:

- Critical skill and competency gaps
- Succession planning and leadership continuity
- Workforce reshaping and modernization
- Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility goals

If an SHCP is outdated or incomplete, staffing plan discussions should inform its refresh.

Enhancing the Framework

Workforce Analytics

Use available HR data to inform decisions, including:

- Retirement eligibility and attrition trends
- Time-to-fill and hiring velocity
- Workload or mission demand indicators

Simple dashboards improve leadership visibility and decision-making.

Technology and Tools

Automated vacancy tracking, hiring pipelines, and dashboards:

- Reduce administrative burden
- Improve consistency across bureaus
- Enable Department-wide reporting

Risk and Continuity Planning

Staffing plans should explicitly address:

- Single points of failure
- Hard-to-fill or niche skill sets
- Knowledge transfer needs
- Surge or emergency response capacity

Scenario planning strengthens workforce resilience.

Governance, Communication, and Metrics

Quarterly workforce governance forums—including HR, budget, and mission leaders—support alignment and transparency.

Recommended KPIs include:

- Time to fill
- Early attrition
- Hiring execution against plan
- Mission impact indicators (where applicable)

Practical Implementation Sequence

1. **Baseline:** Compile funded vacancies and attrition risks
2. **Categorize:** Mission enablement vs. operational sustainment
3. **Prioritize:** Apply the importance–urgency matrix
4. **Cost & Scenario Test:** Align with funding realities
5. **Quarterly Refresh:** Update as conditions evolve
6. **Strategic Alignment:** Ensure consistency with SHCPs

Outcome

This DOC Workforce Prioritization Framework enables bureaus to make **transparent, defensible, and mission-aligned staffing decisions**—even in constrained environments. By combining consistency with flexibility, the Department can strengthen accountability, protect mission delivery, and build a workforce prepared for future challenges.