Fact Sheet: OPM Reinvigorating Merit-Based Hiring through Candidate Ranking

Background:

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has issued a final rule to modernize federal hiring by replacing the outdated "rule of three" with the more flexible and merit-focused "rule of many." This change allows agencies to consider a broader pool of qualified candidates when making competitive and excepted service appointments, ensuring agencies hire based on practical skill and merit, as measured by skills-based assessments. The federal government has endured long-standing frustrations with rigid hiring processes. This rule aims to remove unnecessary barriers to using skills-based assessments in the federal hiring process.

Key Reforms:

- The new "rule of many" will allow agencies to select from a "sufficient number" of top-ranked applicants based on their performance on skills-based assessments using one of four methods:
  - Cut-off score based on job analysis data
  - Cut-off score based on business necessity
  - A set number of top-ranked applicants
  - A percentage of top-ranked applicants
- Hiring managers can now stack rank the full slate of candidates based on their skills and competencies, without regard to the broad "category rating" system. Under "category rating," all applicants within a broadly-defined "category" were considered equally qualified.
- Agencies can now remove more than one candidate at a time (up to the number of remaining positions being filled), starting with the fourth selection.
- OPM will issue updated instructions through a Delegated Examining Operations Handbook.

Impact:

- This rule will create greater hiring flexibility and improved workforce quality.
- Agencies will not have to rely on direct-hire authorities.
- This rule will promote a more efficient, effective, and equitable federal hiring system