Workforce Planning Toolkit
Identifying Key and Mission-Essential Positions
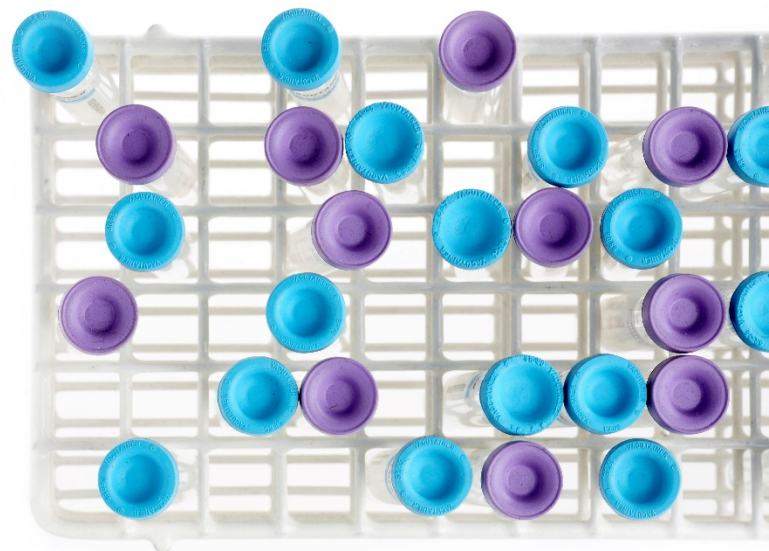
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Introduction

Welcome to the NIH Key and Mission-Essential Positions Identification Tool.

This tool was developed in support of the NIH Workforce Planning Toolkit, which is designed to help jump start workforce planning activities within your Institute or Center. Identification of key and mission-essential positions is an important component of completing a workforce plan to achieve your organization's desired outcomes.

How are Key and Mission-Essential Positions Used at NIH?

HHS leadership has taken measures to close current and emerging critical skills gaps to sustain a high-performing workforce necessary for meeting the agencies overall strategy and mission.

- In 2009 HHS identified mission-essential positions as the most populated positions and series across the agency and sub-agencies. Every year HHS reports to OPM on resource data and targets and NIH OHR provides adhoc reports as requested by HHS.
- Per guidance from EEOC, the NIH Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (OEDI) defines mission-essential positions as positions that most likely result in SES status. They conduct trend analyses of the workforce mission-essential positions by race, national origin, sex and disability to ensure a diverse and inclusive workforce.

What are Key and Mission-Essential Positions?

Key and mission-essential positions are jobs that directly relate and/or align to the accomplishment of the organization's overall strategic goals and mission. These positions are vital to driving and achieving organizational excellence.

Why Include Key and Mission-Essential Positions In Your Workforce Plan?

The inclusion of key and mission-essential positions in your workforce plan has a myriad of drivers both external and internal to NIH including:

▪Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) Act of 2002 – requires NIH to "…assess workforce characteristics and future needs based on agency mission and strategic plan…".

▪5 CFR, Part 250 (Personnel Management in Agencies), Subpart B (Strategic Human Capital Management), 203 (Agency Responsibilities) – requires NIH to "…document the current state of the workforce, project human resources needed to achieve program performance goals, identify shortfalls or gaps, and describe occupations most critical to agency performance…".

▪Government Performance and Results Act MOD of 2010 – requires NIH to"…identify key skills and competencies related to performance management …."

▪Changing workforce demographics at NIH which are affected by many factors including:
- ▪Attrition
- ▪Retirement
- ▪Shifting priorities

The Value of Identifying Key and Mission-Essential Positions

How can identifying key and mission-essential positions help me?

All positions are important, although some are more closely aligned to the overall strategy and mission of the organization. Identification of key and mission-essential positions can help you to focus and prioritize jobs that have the greatest level of impact and influence to sustain a high-performing workforce and achieve your ICs mission. These positons are an important component of your overall workforce plan.

Common Uses of Key and Mission-Essential Positions

- ☑ Prioritize the scope of the workforce (e.g., strategic, core, supporting, misaligned)
- ☑ Determine the workforce balance (i.e., Federal, Non-FTE, or Contractor)
- ☑ Justify hiring needs
- ☑ Prioritize areas for succession planning
- ☑ Identify emerging or critical skill gaps
- ☑ Request for learning and development in critical areas

Common Benefits of Key and Mission-Essential Positions

When included as a part of your workforce plan, key and mission-essential positions can:

- Assist with focus on positions that are strategic and core to the organization's mission, and recognize those that are supportive or misaligned
- Help determine which workforce (e.g., Federal, Non-FTE, or Contractor) is best suited to perform critical functions in the organization
- Support strategic and targeted recruitments to meet the organization's mission and goals
- Aid succession and transition planning with focus on learning and development in critical positions and/or in areas with expected departures or high turnover across the organization
- Address critical skill gaps between the current and desired future workforce and define competencies needed
- Target and prioritize skill requirements and training needs

How to Use This Tool

The right tool for the right job.

This tool is just one component of a larger workforce planning toolkit with many tools, processes, and case studies to assist you as you implement workforce planning in your organization. Make sure and explore the entire toolkit for other tools that might be helpful.

How To Identify Key and Mission-Essential Positions For Your Workforce Plan

The objective of this tool is to help you identify key and mission-essential positions to support your IC's workforce planning activities. This guide will explain the different approaches and actions to consider when identifying these positions. The "How to Identify Key and Mission-Essential Positions Packet" complements this guide with exercises that will help you to identify your own. Once you have identified key and mission-essential positions, you can include them in your own workforce plan. Below lists additional workforce planning toolkit items that can complement this tool:

- Workforce Planning Readiness Assessment
- How-To-Guide: Strategic Workforce Planning Template
- Environmental Scan Primer/SWOT Template
- How-To Guide: Critically Assess Position Need and Conducting a Position Analysis (virtual, part-time, temp, etc.)
- Workforce Planning Metrics 101
- Staff Transition Plan
- Staff Transition Planning Interview Guide

How to Identify key and mission-essential positions Tool

Tool Summary

How do I identify key and mission-essential positions?

While all jobs are important, there are those that more directly impact and have an influence on execution of the mission and achieving the organization's strategy. This tool lays out key steps to identifying mission critical occupations. This tool also provides example exercises to help you identify your own for inclusion in your IC's workforce plan.

Basics of Identifying Key and Mission-Essential Positions For Your Workforce Plan

1. Inventory positions and list them as either current key and mission-essential positions or other positions

2. Segment positions by role and mission area

3. Prioritize key and mission-essential positions for focus

4. Conclusion

"Segmenting **roles** and identifying the **positions** with the **greatest influence** and impact on the mission can help you to **focus and prioritize** workforce planning activities."

Workforce Planning

How can you start to identify key position and mission-essential positions in your IC?

As a starting point, you can start with your Institute's **most recent key positions list.** Identification of Key Positions were mandated by OPM in 2009 for succession planning purposes. Helpful Criteria for identifying Key and Mission-Essential Positions is included in the corresponding **packet** to this guide.

Another good reference is the annual **NIH MD 715 report** published by OEDI. There you will find data and trends about mission-essential positions identified for NIH.

Note: It is recommended that you collaborate with key stakeholders such as IC leadership, OEDI, and OHR when identifying your list. Your IC's Key and Mission-Essential Positions may differ from the NIH's based on your workforce size, mission, and strategic goals.

INSTRUCTIONS:

❖ Use the <u>Key and Mission-Essential Positions Identification Worksheet</u>* to list all positions within your organization with relevant series number. Start with your organization's current list of Key and Mission-Essential Positions followed by the other positions. *The corresponding packet to this guide includes helpful criteria for identifying key and mission-essential positions.*

❖ Next mark "X" to identify the <u>Primary</u> mission area; mark "S" if a secondary mission exists. You can find the mission areas within your own organization's strategic plan (e.g., Prevention, Protection, Human Development).

❖ Then you can assign a role for each position. The next slide has questions to help you determine an position's role in your organization.

Position	Series #	Role Segment	Prevention (Mission Area)	K/M-EP (Y/N)	Priority (Y/N)
Current Key Position and Mission-Essential Positions					
Administrative Officer	341	Core		Y	
Microbiologist	403	Strategic	X	Y	Y
Medical Officer	602	Strategic	X	Y	Y
Other Positions					
Mail and File Clerk	305	Supporting			

example

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*The Mission-Essential Positions Worksheet and Segmentation Roles approach is used by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

Segment Positions

How can segmenting positions by role and mission help?

Because there are many positions that play important roles across NIH, distinguishing between key and mission-essential positions and other positions can be challenging. Segmenting positions by strategic, core, supporting, or as misaligned roles can help you make those distinctions. Those determined as playing strategic and/or core roles are your key and mission-essential positions.

INSTRUCTIONS (Continued):

❖ **The following Segmentation Roles* with questions can help you to determine the role that each position plays relative to the identified mission area for entry in the Key and Mission-Essential Positions Identification Worksheet. Those that you answer "Yes" to being either Strategic or Core are your keys and mission-essential positions.**
- **Remember, titles and levels do not matter in determining if a role is strategic; rather it is role's relation to the organization's strategy.**
- **When in doubt, apply the 80/20 rule. If the role identified applies to 80% of an occupation then assign that role.**

Strategic
- Does this position play a vital role to driving and achieving strategy goals?
- If this role were to go unfilled, would the future success be compromised or put at high-risk?
- Does this position change with time and strategy?

Core
- Does this position relate to operational excellence?
- Is there considerable risk to goal/strategy achievement if these roles are not filled?
- Is this position called a "never out job" (e.g., always want these jobs filled)

Supporting
- Does this position's role keep the internal operation working smoothly, such as IT, finance, or HR?
- Does this position support the business processes that enable the strategic and core roles to deliver the mission?

Misaligned
- Can this position be redeployed?
- Is there no risk to the organization if the role were to go unfilled?

*The Mission-Essential Positions Worksheet and Segmentation Roles approach is used by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

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Prioritize Key and Mission-Essential Positions

How can prioritizing key and mission-essential positions help focus workforce planning?

The last step is to prioritize your identified key and mission-essential positions to help scope and pinpoint where efforts should focus first. Priority key and mission-essential positions are the most impactful, influential, and relative to its mission area. Conduct an environmental scan to determine if there are risks associated to Priority key and mission-essential positions that will require immediate or future action planning (e.g., strategic outreach and recruitment, implementation of employee incentive, flexible schedules, development, and engagement programs)

INSTRUCTIONS (continued):

❖ **Last, identify two or three Priority Key and Mission-Essential Positions, by entering "Y" in the appropriate column.**

❖ **Which of these positions are most impactful relative to its mission area?**

❖ **Once you have identified priority key and mission-essential positions, use the SKEPTIC Model* to complete an environmental scan. You can consider** <u>action planning</u> **on the one or more key and essential-mission positions that demonstrate potential risks/opportunities:**

Social/Demographic	• Are there risks/opportunities due to expected shifts in demographics or the media view of the workforce?
Kompetition	• Is your organization unable to match or compete with other agencies/private sectors on employee incentive, flexible work schedule, and engagement programs?
Economics	• Do current economic trends imply revenue and funding issues, or job growth/unemployment rates?
Political/Regulatory	• Do changes in administration, elections, emergence health challenges, health policies or new health guidelines pose risks/opportunities?
Technology	• Is training needed to address technological trends/innovations, new approaches and requirements?
Industry/Suppliers	• Are there new or emerging competencies that impact the field?
Customers	• Are customer/stakeholder expectations changing in the field or requirements of stakeholders including congress evolving that pose risks/opportunities?

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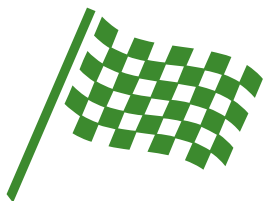
Conclusion

The conclusion.

The final step is to obtain leadership approval for identified key and mission-essential positions and submit to NIH OHR for approval. Remember to include the **Key and Mission-Essential Positions Identification Worksheet** with Key Position Criteria and Segmented Role Definitions for methodology and context. Once approved through the appropriate channels, you will be able to begin action planning for your key and mission-essential positions within your workforce plan.

Work with **Key stakeholders** and **Leadership** to Finalize
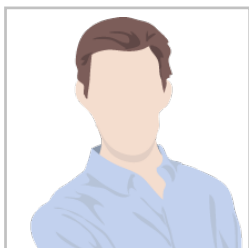Obtain leadership **feedback** and **approval**.

Maintain and Update
Determine who in your IC will keep the data. Update annually or other recurring basis.

Immediate **Next Steps**
Begin **action planning** for key and mission-essential positions in your workforce plan!

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Workforce Planning

Now it's your turn.

Now that you understand the importance of identifying and including key and mission-essential positions in your workforce plan, it's time to create your own!

Refer to the corresponding **"How to Identify Key and Mission-Essential Positions Packet"** in the toolkit to get started. You will find a basic structure for identifying key position and mission-essential positions the information in these slides will help guide you through the process and provide you with resources along the way. You may need to rearrange, add, or omit certain columns or rows based on your specific needs as they might not all be relevant.

Good luck!

My Key Position and Mission-Essential Positions Identification Worksheet

Position *Series* *Role* *Mission*

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