



Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Frequently Asked Questions on Smart Hire

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT:

In support of the President's 2010 Hiring Reform and in an effort to streamline the job application process, FERC has moved to an exclusively automated hiring system. This system, called **Smart Hire**, is a web-based applicant tracking system that enables FERC employees and outside job applicants alike to easily apply for job opportunities at FERC. With Smart Hire, job applicants can expect a fully integrated on-line application experience through USAJOBS - the Federal government's job board. Here at FERC, the implementation of Smart Hire provides direct benefits to job applicants. These benefits include:

- Easily create and store multiple resumes on USAJOBS and seamlessly pass the desired resume from USAJOBS to FERC's Smart Hire Hiring Management system (provided by Monster Government Solutions).
- Receive auto-generated notifications of status updates to submitted applications.
- Provide a more efficient application and hiring process through the elimination of essay-based responses and paper-based applications.

GENERAL QUESTIONS:

1. Why is FERC moving to an automated system (Smart Hire) in place of its current manual system?
 - a. The benefits of automation using Smart Hire include:
 - Increased efficiency between Program Offices and HRD.
 - Reduced time to hire by having a streamlined approach for hiring managers and job applicants.
 - Smart Hire aligns with the 2010 Federal Hiring Reform.
 - Replaces a manual process that is cumbersome and time-consuming for applicants, managers and human resources staff.
 - Provides an effective employment service comparable to the private industry and other Federal agencies already using this technology.
 - Enables the FERC human resources directorate to increase timeliness, reduce paper, and improve customer service in the recruitment process.
2. How does FERC's use of Smart Hire improve the job application process for applicants?
 - a. Smart Hire completely integrates with USAJOBS. Applicants can create a USAJOBS account at www.USAJOBS.gov or use their existing USAJOBS account to apply for FERC positions. Further, applicants no longer need to provide long narrative information in their

resumes to address KSA's, but instead will respond to a concise questionnaire directly online in a user-friendly process.

3. What are KSA's?
 - a. KSA's (also known as competencies) are job-related knowledge, skills, and abilities that are used to determine the extent to which your qualifications (experience and education) match the requirements of the job for which you are applying.
 - b. The Smart Hire system will rate applicants based on their responses to questions based on these job-related KSA's/competencies.
4. Since the system will rate me according to my self-assessment and response to the questions, what prevents me from selecting those choices that give me the highest scores?
 - a. Nothing will prevent you from doing this. However, falsifying or answering questions to mislead the system's automated process is no different than providing false or misleading information on your application under the old process. Applicants are reminded that this is a federal job application system. Providing false information, creating fake ID's or SSN's, or failing to answer all questions truthfully and completely may be grounds for not hiring you, for disbarment from federal service, or for dismissal after being hired. Falsifying a federal job application, attempting to violate the privacy of others, or attempting to compromise this system is punishable by fine or imprisonment (U.S. Code, Title 18, section 1001).
5. Does FERC currently post jobs on USAJOBS?
 - a. Yes. FERC currently posts jobs on USAJOBS, but the application process will be much more efficient by integrating an applicant's USAJOBS profile information directly to a FERC specific application.
6. What does the change in system to Smart Hire mean to me as a job applicant?
 - a. The plan is to use the Smart Hire system for all FERC vacancy announcements. However, FERC is currently transitioning to the system; therefore not all job posting will go through Smart Hire. When you apply for a new FERC position, please refer to the "How To Apply" section of the announcement for instructions on how to apply.
 - b. For positions that specifically state to apply through www.USAJOBS.gov, this process will link directly into Smart Hire. The application process will be online, can be completed from your home or any computer with Internet capability, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You will be able to access the status of your application at any time. There will be no necessity for emailing, mail or hand-carrying application materials.
7. Can I still apply to a FERC position by submitting my application via email or in person?
 - a. It depends. Although FERC will post open positions via USAJOBS, FERC is still transitioning to Smart Hire. Therefore, there may still be job postings that an applicant needs to apply via a manual process. Job seekers should refer to the "How To Apply" section of the announcement for instructions on how to apply.

- b. **Eventually**, FERC will no longer accept email or paper-based applications, requiring all applications to be submitted through www.USAJOBS.gov.
8. When will I be able to find FERC vacancies via USAJOBS?
- a. FERC currently posted vacancies on USAJOBS; therefore, you are encouraged to seek open FERC positions online via USAJOBS now.
9. How do I ask a question that is not here?
- a. General questions may be submitted to AskHR@FERC.gov. For questions specific to a vacancy, please contact the assigned Human Resources Staffing Specialist linked to that vacancy.

SYSTEM SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR APPLICANTS:

Account Creation:

10. Do I have to have a USAJOBS account in order to apply for FERC vacancies?
- a. Yes. The FERC application process will be completely online as of April 2011.
11. Do I have to have two accounts, one for USAJOBS and one for Smart Hire?
- a. No. Applicants will only need one account on www.USAJOBS.gov, which will automatically link to all FERC vacancies.
12. I am uncomfortable using my Social Security Number (SSN) to establish my account in the system. Is there any way I can apply for a position online without my SSN?
- a. No. Your SSN is one of the few reliable means that government agencies have of distinguishing one applicant from another. The SSN is the identifier suggested for use by the Office of Personnel Management for federal job applications, and is the only way we can definitively differentiate between applicants. If someone else attempts to open a new account with your SSN, the system administrator will be alerted that your SSN already exists with a specific User ID and Password and that a new account is trying to be established with the same SSN.
13. How many resumes can I store on USAJOBS?
- a. You can create and store up to 5 resumes, 2 of which can be previously created and uploaded from a computer.
 - b. It is recommended that you utilize the Resume Builder tool within USAJOBS as it provides many benefits to applicants, including:
 - i. Consistent and uniform format
 - ii. Additional prevention of errors and omissions
 - iii. Searchable by prospective employers
14. Can I convert an uploaded resume to the Resume Builder format?
- a. No; therefore it is preferred to use Resume Builder and create a new resume from content of your existing resume.

15. Can I list more than one job during the same work period on my resume (simultaneous employment)?
 - a. Yes. Resume Builder allows for multiple jobs within same start/end date period (e.g. two part-time jobs, etc.).
16. Will extraneous items such as “desired work environment” appear on my resume if I use the Resume Builder tool?
 - a. No. There are some data elements that are asked (such as “desired work environment”) that will **not** appear on a resume but may come up in a search by recruiters.
17. If I am not finished with school, can I put my estimated completion date on the resume?
 - a. Yes. If you are currently completing your degree, select the degree (in the highest degree attained field) and enter in the expected degree completion date.
18. How many pages can my **uploaded** resume be?
 - a. There is no maximum number of pages. Uploaded resumes must be less than 3mb and in one of the following formats: GIF, JPG, JPEG, PNG, RTF, PDF, or Word (DOC or DOCX).
19. Does USAJOBS allow for SES resumes?
 - a. Yes. USAJOBS allows for SES resumes (especially within Resume Builder). It will prompt you if you want to convert a resume to an SES resume, if you are a GS-14 or higher.
20. If I have used a SES resume to apply to positions, do I need to make another resume to apply for GS-15 positions and below? Which one should be posted?
 - a. It is recommended that you create 2 resumes, one for SES applications and one for GS applications (if this applies to you).
21. How many non-resume documents (cover letter, transcripts, SF-50, DDR-14, etc.) can I store within the “Saved Documents” section on USAJOBS?
 - a. You can save a total of 5 documents (non-resumes).

Searching and Applying for jobs:

22. When I am searching for job via “key word”, do I need to put commas in between words?
 - a. Use Boolean search method (e.g. nurse AND technician, doctor OR nurse, doctor AND/OR nurse, “intensive care unit”) for more precise search results.
23. Are recruiters looking for key words in the resume?
 - a. No. Answering the assessment questions determines your qualification.
24. How often do agencies actively search for resumes?
 - a. It depends on the recruiter, the agency, and the position being filled.
25. Can I preview the vacancy questions before applying?
 - a. YES. In addition to viewing the vacancy position duties and qualifications, you can preview the vacancy questions. Within the “Qualifications and Evaluations” section of the vacancy posting, look for the line item and select the link: “To preview questions please click here”. You can also print and review the application questions prior to applying for the position.
 - b. To print the entire vacancy announcement, look on the right side of the screen and select “Print Preview”.
26. Are KSA eliminated due to the Hiring Reform?

- a. KSAs are now known as “competencies”. These still exist for positions. What has changed is the replaced need for narrative essay questions with self-assessment questions (e.g. multiple choice, true/false, yes/no, fill-in).
27. Who developed the self-assessment questions for position vacancies?
- a. FERC has employed a rigorous and proven process for vetting assessment questions that both aligns with the positions KSAs and meet Hiring Reform standards. This process involves collaboration and expertise from HRD staff as well as Subject Matter Experts representing the vacancy’s Program Office.
28. When is the deadline for completing an application?
- a. All applications (for any position) must be completed and submitted by **11:59pm EST of that vacancy closing date**. You must complete the application – including answering all application questions – prior to this deadline in order for your application to be valid.
29. Can I edit a resume during the application?
- a. No. You must select a resume that exists within your USAJOBS account **prior** to answering position-specific questions. You may wish to print out a copy of your chosen resume to view while answering the questions. You can **cancel** that application and then reapply.
30. Can I save an unfinished application and return at a later time? Likewise, can I edit a completed application?
- a. Yes. For unfinished applications: simply click the “save for later” button and return to the application within the “Application Status” section of your USAJOBS account, anytime up to **11:59pm (EST) of the vacancy closing date**.
- b. For completed applications: return to your USAJOBS account and find the vacancy you want to edit. Click the job title link, and then click on “Apply Online”. You will be presented with the application you previously submitted, and may update any of your responses and submit the application again. Be sure to click all the way through the application process and save the new application at the end. After you hit submit, return to your USAJOBS account to complete the process and update USAJOBS with your new application.
31. If I click on the “Apply” button before 11:59 EST of the closing date, is my application valid?
- a. No. You need to not only click “apply” by **11:59 EST of the vacancy date**, you also need to submit and complete the application by the close of vacancy, which includes answering all of the position-specific eligibility and assessment questions. USAJOBS provides a verification page immediately upon submitting the application.
32. I noticed the system only accepts online applications, how do I send other attachments, such as my college transcripts, SF-50's, etc.?
- a. When applying for a position, please provide documentation that verifies your eligibility for that position based on the position requirements (examples include: SF-50 for MP announcements, transcripts for positive education, DD214 for Veterans Preference).
- b. You may submit supporting documentation anytime up to **11:59pm (EST) of the vacancy closing date**.
- c. To determine which documents are required, look for the “Required Documents” portion of the vacancy posting, which is typically within the section “How to Apply”.

Checking the status of an application:

33. How will I find out about the status of my application?
- a. An enhanced communication capability allows for any status changes that occur from HRD staffing specialists within the FERC hiring system (Smart Hire) to directly update the status changes in the applicant's USAJOBS account, within the "Application Status" section of your my Account page. Additionally, applicants can select the option to have USAJOBS email them for any application status changes that appear on their USAJOBS account.
 - b. As soon as you submit your application, be sure to print or save a copy of the vacancy announcement and your answers to the questions.
 - c. There are four (4) statuses that HR will update to your application throughout the process:
 - i. Application received
 - ii. Met/did not meet minimum qualifications
 - iii. Referred/not referred to the hiring manager
 - iv. Selected/not selected for the position
34. Can I get email alerts for status changes?
- a. Yes. Within the "Application Status" section of USAJOBS, click on "Notification Settings" and choose the desired email options.
35. Once a selection is made, how will I know/be notified?
- a. In addition to a direct correspondence from HR, the status of that application will change to state you have been selected for that position.
36. Can I contact Staffing Specialists within Human Resources if I have additional questions?
- a. Yes. We at FERC pride ourselves in customer service and encourage you to come to HR with any questions. Each vacancy will provide contact information for the assigned Human Resources Staffing Specialist linked to that vacancy. They will happily guide you through the automated job application process, using USAJOBS and Smart Hire.
37. How long does USAJOBS keep the applicants profile information?
- a. USAJOBS keeps information indefinitely. FERC HRD retains information for two (2) years.
38. How do I find out more information about applying for jobs through USAJOBS?
- a. To learn more about the USAJOBS online application process, go to <http://help.USAJOBS.opm.gov/jobseeker/FAQ/>.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR FERC EMPLOYEES AS JOB APPLICANTS:

39. What training will be available to FERC employee job applicants?
- a. Members of FERC's Human Resources Division (HRD) will be providing "Using USAJOBS" classes to help FERC employees set up a new account and profile with USAJOBS. Times and dates will be made available to all FERC employees, and will require FERC employees to make a reservation.

- i. Creating a USAJOBS account
 - ii. Search for jobs and preview position requirements
 - iii. Building and uploading resumes and other application material
 - iv. How to Apply, Save, and Share a job posting on USAJOBS
 - v. Editing a job application
- b. In addition, HRD staff will be available to assist applicants with both Smart Hire questions and position specific questions.
40. Will there be any written instructions/guide for FERC employees?
- a. Yes. A PowerPoint presentation will be available on FERC.net within the HRD intranet page.
41. Can I apply for FERC jobs online using my office computer?
- a. Yes. FERC's policy permits employees to use their office computers to apply for **FERC-only** jobs. However, you are reminded that you may use government property/resources to apply for jobs only if it does not interfere with the performance of your regular duties. Please consult with your direct manager in order to arrange a preset time to apply for positions during work hours.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR PROGRAM OFFICE SELECTING OFFICIALS AND ADMISITRATIVE OFFICERS:

42. How will Smart Hire help HRD and Program Offices?
- a. Moving to the Smart Hire automated and online hiring process provides a more streamlined application and hiring process for job applicants, HR, AOs and the Selecting Official. The result decreases HRD and Program Office's Time to Hire, while still providing the best-qualified candidates for FERC.
43. I understand that the system is based on applicants' self-certifying their responses to the questions. How do I verify that they are answered honestly and that I receive quality candidates?
- a. Applicants will be reminded in the vacancy announcement about the penalties for providing false or misleading information. Additionally, the Human Resources Specialist will conduct a quality review on the top rated applicants prior to issuing the certificate to the hiring manager. The quality review will be a comparison of the applicant's responses to the questions and the applicant's resume. Human Resources Specialists can also request any additional information, e.g., college transcripts, SF-50's and verification of veterans' preference. The true test is during the interview process with the applicant. Selecting Officials should ensure that the interview process is used to ask clarifying questions and to do a reference check on potential hires.
44. Will the AOs and Selecting Officials receive training on how to use Smart Hire?
- a. Training and demonstrations will be conducted for FERC staff based on their level of interaction with Smart Hire and their current vacancy needs.