# Guidance for Applying Veterans' Preference

## What is Veterans' Preference?

Under state law, qualified veterans seeking merit employment with the Commonwealth are entitled to preference in being considered for job interviews with state agencies. In accordance with Kentucky Revised Statute (KRS) 18A.150, Veterans' Preference provides veterans, and in some instances their family members, opportunities to receive interviews in the selection process for merit employment within state government agencies. Veterans must have been granted an Honorable or General Discharge to receive this status. All applicants claiming veterans' preference status are required to submit documentation of proof of service at the time of application in order to receive preference status. As with all applicants, veterans must meet minimum requirements for a job before an interview can be offered.

## Identifying Applicants with Veterans' Preference

Vacant positions in the merit system are advertised on the careers.ky.gov website via the Personnel Cabinet's online recruitment system, the Career Opportunities System (COS). Hiring agencies initiate filling job vacancies by creating a requisition which results in the vacancy appearing on the careers.ky.gov website for a minimum of ten calendar days. Once the vacancy closes, the Personnel Cabinet, Register Branch provides the hiring agency the requisition (req) and attaches the certified register report to the req. The report exists as a spreadsheet in PDF format and is the official list of potential eligible candidates who may be considered for that vacancy. For information on accessing and viewing the certified req report click here.

The certified register report is also the official document for identifying individuals with Veterans' Preference. All applicants who qualify for Veterans' Preference are identified with a "Yes" in the "Veterans' Preference" column on the report. The hiring agency must offer interviews to a minimum of five qualified applicants with preference. If there are fewer than five, then all qualified applicants with preference must be offered an interview. The interviews shall **not** be offered until the hiring agency confirms that the individuals meet minimum qualifications. This is done by submitting the list of candidates to be considered to the Personnel Cabinet via the MQR (minimum qualifications review) request process.

Proof of military service or a qualifying event must be verified in the Register Branch before preference is awarded. In addition, such preference is not retroactive to previously certified registers. Therefore, please do not rely upon the employment application or output fields in COS to determine veteran status. To ensure compliance with requirements to offer interviews, refer only to the Certified Register Report to identify those with verified veterans' preference.

## Creating Effective Job Postings with Respect to Veterans' Preference

Getting good results in hiring begins with the advertisement for the job vacancy. Providing adequate job details will not only help to attract a desired candidate pool, but will also assist applicants in determining whether they have the preferred skills and abilities sought before deciding to apply. Conducting interviews for individuals who may not be given serious consideration for hire can be an inefficient use of agency resources. It also creates a hardship for the candidate who must sometimes expend significant time and money traveling to interviews for jobs which he or she has little to no chance of obtaining.

While this holds true for all candidates, it is especially true for qualified candidates with veterans' preference status who are more likely to be selected for interview by virtue of the agency's requirement to comply with Veterans' Preference. Veterans have shared some of their experiences in seeking employment in state government with the Personnel Cabinet and it is our expectation that no veteran should experience an interview in which they are treated in anything but a professional manner and be given proper consideration.

Veterans also have a responsibility in only applying to vacancies in which they are interested and possess the skills in which the agency is seeking—without detailed job information, this can be difficult for them to make a determination. The information that appears in the job posting, such as the minimum requirements, is a combination of fields auto-populated directly from the job specification and from information entered by the req creator. This manually entered information should include agency-specific details with respect to the skills and abilities sought and other job-related information.

Agency submitted req details can have an important impact on applicants who are deciding whether to apply to your position. Hiring manages should consult their HR professionals on providing job details relevant to the selection process. Embrace the following suggestions for these key req detail fields and improve the experience for job seekers and improve the results of your postings, too.

**Vacancy Type—Promotional or Competitive:**
Advertising as a promotional vacancy is advisable when the preferred candidate is most likely to come from the ranks of classified employees. Only candidates with merit status at the time a register is certified are eligible to be considered for promotional or *internal mobility* vacancies. External or competitive candidates will not be certified to hiring agencies on Internal Mobility registers.

**"Location Varies" Designation:**
As a reminder, it is necessary to advertise a classified position as "Location Varies" when designation of the work county will depend on the location of the selected candidate's home, or when the position does not have a typical work station due to travel requirements. In those situations, follow the instructions below.

In COS:

When creating the COS requisition, select "Location Varies" on the Location field. Also, clearly explain the details of the work location in the first paragraph of the Description of Job Duties field. Specifically, indicate the counties and/or the region of the state in which the selected applicant will perform his or her duties. The remainder of the Description of Job Duties field can be used to list job duties and expectations of the position.

**Description of Job Duties:**
This is one of the most critical areas of the req for attracting the desired applicant pool. In this field it is important to list *specifics* about the day-to-day duties and other relevant details of the job.

- When creating a requisition, instead of copying from the more generic description included in the job specification, use 2-3 paragraphs to explain to the job candidate what this job involves and what the new recruit will be responsible for doing. This is especially true if there are specific criteria the hiring manager will use to screen candidates.
- If agency-related experience or state-specific program knowledge is desired, be sure to include that in the job description and try to avoid using acronyms unless you explain what they represent.
- Use objective criteria; list preferences that help the candidate understand, objectively, if they fit the description. Instead of *"ability to manage large teams"* you could say *"prefers candidates who have managed teams with more than 10 direct reports for at least two years"*.
- List other essential functions such as the requirement to work over-time, an alternate work schedule or be able to travel overnight.

**Identify Pertinent Preferred Skills Questions (PSQs)**
The Personnel Cabinet provides an assortment of preferred skills questions (PSQs) that can be utilized by agencies to help determine an applicant's qualifications and suitability for a vacancy. The hiring agency may choose from a pre-

defined set of questions that relate to the position being filled, relative to a skillset desired for a particular job title. Applicants are presented selected PSQs when submitting an application for employment, and the agency.

Important note: Avoid using PSQ responses for screening if the questions were not part of *your* COS postings. All of an applicant's PSQ responses are viewable on the application. However, the applicant does not have the opportunity to update those responses unless presented with the questions during the submission process. For example, a person who indicated unavailability for travel when applying for a job last year may now be able to travel. If your req did not ask the question, the applicant cannot change the response.

**Agency Contact:**
While 'agency contact' is not a required field on the req, agencies are encouraged to list a representative who can be contacted by interested candidates for more information. (If the req does not include an agency contact, the Division of Career Opportunities will provide inquiring applicants with the name of the req creator.) Providing an email and/or telephone number gives candidates the opportunity to seek additional details useful in deciding whether to apply.

## Selecting the Required Number of Veterans for Interviews

If the number of qualified veterans submitted for Minimum Qualifications Review (MQR) does not satisfy requirements set forth in KRS 18A.150 (7), the Personnel Cabinet will review the remainder of the identified veterans on the certified register report and update the HR status to *Approved MQ* for those who possess minimum qualifications. The hiring agency will receive notification. Remember, there are no provisions in which an agency may bypass an eligible veteran in their consideration of offering interviews. **Note:** Only individuals who have provided required documentation, such as a form DD214, to the Personnel Cabinet by the register certification date will receive Veterans' Preference designation on the certified register report, regardless of having marked 'yes' to being a veteran or a qualifying family member on the state application.

**Minimum Qualifications Review (MQR) Reminder:**
The certified register report attached to the COS requisition (req) contains a list of candidates who have attested to meeting minimum qualifications. However, all candidates being considered for interview must be formally reviewed and approved by the Personnel Cabinet's Division of Career Opportunities (DCO) for minimum qualifications before offering the interview. Please ensure that hiring managers refrain from offering interviews prior to MQR approval. The consequences of offering interviews to applicants who do not meet minimum qualifications may include confusion, complaints, grievances and appeals before the Personnel Board.

## Interview 'No Shows'

Agencies may request an applicant's removal from an Immediate Fill job title consideration if that applicant fails to appear, without good cause, for a scheduled interview. Hiring managers should send the removal requests to their agency's Human Resource professional, who will route the requests to the Personnel Cabinet, Register Branch, for review. A request should include the applicant's name, the req number, job title, and date and time of the scheduled interview. A request should also include a statement to affirm that the applicant actually accepted the interview offer.

## Recruiting Assistance

Hiring agencies with recruiting difficulties for filling various positions have the ability to feature specific jobs on the Personnel Cabinet's job seekers' web page at Careers.ky.gov. A rotating spotlight section in the center of the landing page includes space for an introductory paragraph and picture with a link taking the reader to more detailed, agency provided information. Ideally, the information should feature a current employee in the position with a few statements and a picture. To request placement of a job in the spotlight, agency HR professionals may complete and submit a request form located on the HR Administrators web page. Since its launch in 2013, the careers.ky.gov site has averaged over 100,000 visitors a month. Agencies are encouraged to take advantage of this tool to get your difficult-to-fill jobs noticed by job seekers.

## Veterans Advisor

Stuart Clark has worked in the Division of Career Opportunities since September of 2001. He formerly served in the U.S. Army. Stuart assumed the role Veterans Advisor in the Applicant Services and Recruitment Branch in January of 2009. Among his many duties, Stuart helps veterans translate their military experience into civilian terms and navigate the state application process. Stuart also counsels veterans who do not understand their responsibilities. Agency HR professionals are encouraged to contact Stuart if they receive reports of individuals with preference who frequently decline interview requests, who fail to appear for a scheduled interview or perform poorly during actual interviews. Contact Stuart at StuartT.Clark@ky.gov

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that our veterans and their families have sacrificed much on our behalf. They have earned the right to be respectfully considered in our selection processes. Success stories exist where the veteran may not have appeared to be the best candidate on paper, but shined during the interview process and got the job. The goal is to foster an environment where that type of success can flourish. All parties are tasked with the mission of compliance, both in the spirit and the letter of the law.