# POSITION DESCRIPTION

# Director of the Office of Presidential Personnel, Executive Office of the President

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| **OVERVIEW** | |
| Position Type | Presidential appointment (PA) |
| Office Mission | The Office of Presidential Personnel (PPO) oversees the selection process for presidential appointments.[[1]](#endnote-1) PPO ensures that all PAS, PA, non-career SES and Schedule C appointments are qualified to do the work desired by the administration; are mutually agreeable to the president and the head of the respective departments and agencies; and available to serve when desired. (Note: if federal judges are being proposed, it is the counsel to the president, rather than the director of PPO, who will carry the primary responsibility for the necessary vetting of judicial candidates.) |
| Position Overview | The PPO director heads the Office of Presidential Personnel and functions as a strong source of substantive and strategic advice for the president on all presidential personnel issues administration-wide. |
| Compensation | $172,200 in 2016[[2]](#endnote-2) |
| Position Reports to | Reporting structure depends on the president’s preferences. The PPO director has traditionally reported directly to the president (for example, in Bush 43) or to the president through the White House chief of staff (for example, in Bush 41). |
| **RESPONSIBILITIES** | |
| Management Scope | The management and scope of this office varies per administration. In the Bush 43 administration, there was one deputy assistant (though only for the first nine months), five special assistants, a person specializing in part-time boards and commissions, a person overseeing candidate research and vetting, and a person focused on Schedule C positions.In the current Obama administration, the director of PPO has two deputy directors, three or four associate directors, an associate director specializing in part-time boards and commissions, an officer specializing in clearing Schedule C appointments, a congressional liaison officer, a political clearance officer and an information systems officer.  At the start of a new administration, PPO staff may be numbered at around 75, some being volunteers. However, as the initial crush of appointments subsides, the staff tends to include between 25 and 35 employees. |
| Primary Responsibilities | * Ensures that PPO carries out its mission of:   + Analyzing different executive department posts;   + Identifying, recruiting, vetting, and recommending qualified candidates to serve the president in departments and agencies across the government;   + Responding to candidates; and   + Communicating with departments and agencies on personnel matters. * Ensures that the personnel priorities of the administration are being addressed. * Ensures that choices reflect the highest standards of ethics and aptitude.[[3]](#endnote-3) * Functions as a strong source of substantive and strategic advice for the president on all presidential personnel issues administration-wide. * Obtains necessary presidential approval of proposed candidates, initiates the candidate background clearance process, coordinates press releases and “roll-outs” of presidential announcements, ensures timely delivery of nominating documents to the Senate, and obtains the required presidential appointing signatures. * Effectively implements human capital operations and processes for the administration. * Handles all matters of personnel-related correspondence on behalf of the president.[[4]](#endnote-4) * Works with White House counsel’s vetting staff to assess and help resolve, if necessary, candidate conflict of interest and suitability matters, and works with White House legislative affairs to help ensure timely, fair assessment of nominees’ qualifications. Also works closely with Cabinet secretaries, executive branch agency heads, and White House liaisons. * Ensures that the administration has realistically aggressive, mutually agreeable appointment goals regarding the specific positions to be filled, by when and by what types of people. * Ensures that appointees have the desired background and knowledge, policy and/or management experience, D.C., regional and/or international experience and other qualities deemed most important for each position. * Ensures that goals are understood and agreed to by all involved in the appointments process: department and agency leadership, the Senate (especially committee leadership), FBI, OGE, other relevant investigative agencies, White House legislative affairs, communications, vetting counsel, policy teams and others. * Ensures that there are enough qualified key PPO staff (especially special assistants and function heads) to do the necessary work. * Ensures that there are effective, informed connections with potential sources for prospective nominees, to include: members of Congress, governors’ offices, trade associations, think tanks, major supporters, notables currently or previously associated with relevant subjects, and potential nominees themselves. * Ensures that matters such as disruptive PPO office moves after the inauguration or key PPO personnel leaving before the end of the first year are not allowed, so as not to diminish PPO’s capacity to accomplish desired outcomes. |
| Strategic Goals and Priorities | * Depends on the policy priorities of the administration. * Get the Top 100 priority Senate-confirmed political appointments confirmed by Inauguration. * Get the Top 400 priority Senate-confirmed political appointments confirmed by the August recess. |
| **REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCIES** | |
| Requirements | * Strong understanding of federal government structure and process * Known, highly regarded professional trusted by the president (highly preferred) * Highly organized, results-oriented and proven effective process and people manager in a fast-paced environment * Experienced working with senior executives or officials * Demonstrated interest in and success with civic involvements * Highly interested in the senior PPO position and PPO’s mission, not in the next job that might result from it * The director of PPO should be announced immediately after election[[5]](#endnote-5) |
| Competencies | * Strong judgment: ability to accurately evaluate merit, character and aptitude * Fact-based decision maker, including regarding people * Anticipatory and critical thinking skills * Seasoned communication and negotiation skills * Ability to work under pressure, particularly at the beginning of the new administration * Ability to say “no” when appropriate[[6]](#endnote-6) |
| **PAST APPOINTEES** | |
| Rodin Mehrbani (2016) - Special Assistant to the President and Associate Counsel to the President, Office of the White House Counsel; Senior Vetting Counsel for Presidential Personnel, Office of Presidential Personnel; Domestic Director for Presidential Personnel, Office of Presidential Personnel; Special Policy Advisor, Office of the Secretary, Department of Housing and Urban Development; Senior Vetting Counsel for Presidential Personnel, Office of Presidential Personnel[[7]](#endnote-7) | |
| Jonathan McBride (2013 to 2014) - Deputy Assistant to the President at PPO; Special Assistant to the President and the Deputy Director of PPO; Chief Strategy Officer with Universum, a global Employer Branding company; co-founder of Jungle Media Group[[8]](#endnote-8) | |
| Nancy Hogan (2009 to 2013) - Chief of Staff for Presidential Personnel; Deputy Director of Battleground States, Obama for America; Deputy Director for the Democratic National Convention, Obama for America; Northeast Political Director, Obama for America; Advisor to Senator Tom Daschle at Alston & Bird LLP and on his Senate Leadership staff[[9]](#endnote-9) | |
| Lu Reyes (Appointed Deputy Assistant to the President and Acting Assistant to the President for Presidential Personnel) (2008 to 2009) - Special Assistant for Presidential Personnel; Deputy Associate Attorney General; Counselor to the Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division[[10]](#endnote-10) | |
| Joie Gregor (2007 to 2008) - Vice Chairman of Heidrick & Struggles International, Inc.; held a number of senior leadership roles with the same firm including President of North America and managing partner[[11]](#endnote-11) | |
| Liza Wright (2005 to 2007) - Principal at Heidrick and Struggles; Executive recruiter at Capital One[[12]](#endnote-12) | |
| Dina Habib Powell (2003 to 2005) - Special Assistant to the President and Associate Director for PPO; Director of Congressional Affairs to the Chairman of the Republican National Committee[[13]](#endnote-13) | |
| Clay Johnson III (2001 to 2003) - Executive Director of the Bush Presidential Transition; Appointments Director and then Chief of Staff for Governor Bush; President of Horchow Mail Order; President of Neiman Marcus Mail Order; Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer of the Dallas Museum of Art[[14]](#endnote-14) | |

1. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/participate/internships/departments#OPP> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/21stcenturygov/tools/salaries> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/participate/internships/departments#OPP> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Romney Readiness Project position description [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Romney Readiness Project position description [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Romney Readiness Project position description [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Leadership Directories [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/10/06/white-house-announces-jonathan-mcbride-step-down-assistant-president-dir> [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/07/08/white-house-announces-nancy-hogan-step-down-jonathan-mcbride-serve-assis> [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Romney Readiness Project position description [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Romney Readiness Project position description [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Romney Readiness Project position description [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Romney Readiness Project position description [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Romney Readiness Project position description [↑](#endnote-ref-14)