



Federal Job Search Tips

Go Government: Partnership for Public Service is a great resource for applying for Federal Jobs. The following information and more is available at: <https://gogovernment.org/application-process>

USAJOBS is the official website for federal jobs. Remember that name, because USAJOBS has nearly all government job openings and includes all the spicy details about job duties, the minimum qualifications you need to have, the salary range and the basic benefits. You can also find federal internships here. The site has thousands of announcements for jobs and internships, but never fear. Below we offer the following tips and step-by-step instructions to make your federal job search less daunting.

CREATING AN ACCOUNT

Create an account www.USAJOBS.gov. Then you can:

Save and automate job searches. With this feature, you can generate searches based on your preferences for job location, schedule and travel involved. Once you enter those choices, you'll start to get automated emails when a position opens that fits your preferences. Your USAJOBS account also lets you save up to 10 jobs that interest you.

Create and upload multiple versions of your resume. Once you have that perfect master resume, you can get creative from there, fashioning other resumes tailored for specific positions.

Track the status of each of your applications and where they are in the process. Are you still in the running? Is there anything else you should do? Use the HR contact information at the bottom of job announcements to ask additional questions about the position.

SEARCHING FOR POSITIONS

You can refine your searches with the advanced search feature, to narrow by:

- **Agency:** Select one or more agency or office preference.
- **Job categories:** Click a specific occupational series or occupations related to college majors, using the government codes assigned to specific fields. For example, you can search by occupational series 1040 if you are a language specialist. Or when you're first starting, you can just type in "language specialist" and you'll see it comes with a number. Which is, as we mentioned, 1040. Or there's 1000 for the more general "Information, Arts and Publications."
- **Grade:** Select the appropriate GS grade level, which defines job responsibility and compensation based on level of experience.

- **Work schedule and work type:** Search for full-time and permanent positions or short-term positions that last from a few months to a few years. Your choice. There are filter options that include internships and the Pathways Programs, which offer positions specifically for recent graduates and students. If that's you, go for it!
- **Location:** You can choose a city, state or country. Or type in the zip codes of the locations you prefer and choose a radius of five to 200 miles, depending on how far from the bulls-eye you're willing to go.

HOW TO READ FEDERAL JOB ANNOUNCEMENTS

Pay close attention to all the details in a job announcement to make sure you're eligible and qualified for the position—and that you've completed the entire application properly. Read each position description carefully, no matter how long it is. You want to have the best chance there is to apply correctly and make a good impression.

Pay particular attention to the following items:

- **Conditions of Employment:** These conditions are in the requirements section and tell you know if you're eligible to apply.
- **Qualifications:** Hiring managers consider only those applicants with the minimum qualifications, such as a certain education level or years of work experience. This is not a place to wing it and hope for the best.
- **Required Documents:** You'll have to submit a federal resume and, possibly, transcripts and other forms.
- **How to Apply:** Follow these directions closely to be sure you've completed the application correctly.

Also, job announcements have seven sections total: overview, location, duties, requirements, required documents, benefits, and how to apply.

Overview: Gives details of the position's application period, salary, work schedule and pay scale and grade.

Location: Has information on how many people the government wants to hire for a position, in how many places, and where those jobs are located. This section also details options for flexible work schedules, including remote work opportunities.

Duties: Highlights the position's major responsibilities.

Requirements: Identifies the skills and experience you need, and the level of background investigation for the job, and explains how



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the employer will assess applications.

When filling out the application, make sure your responses align with the experiences you've included in your resume. For some applications, you may be able to review questions before you decide to sit down and apply.

Required documents: Includes all the documentation you need to complete the application.

Benefits: Describes additional elements of the compensation package and other perks.

How to Apply: Includes instructions and information about when and how you can expect to hear from the agency and may have additional application materials that are required.

OTHER PLACES TO FIND POSITIONS

Most, but not all, federal jobs and internships are posted on USAJOBS. But there are other places to look for opportunities as well.

Agency Websites

Some agencies post jobs on their own site rather than government's central website. For example, the 17 distinct agencies within the Intelligence Community post positions on their individual agency career webpages or at intelligencecareers.gov. Also, most agencies have a jobs page on their website that provides helpful insights into their hiring processes, organizational charts and mission statements.

Partnership for Public Service Opportunities

The Partnership for Public Service administers several internship and fellowship programs on behalf of the federal government. These opportunities place students and recent graduates in the federal government to gain valuable work experience for short-term assignments. You can learn about these programs on the website or sign up for updates on our programs and USAJOBS.

Career Fairs

Career or job fairs are a great way to meet agency representatives to learn about what agency employees do day to day. While there, you can learn straight from the source about the ins and outs of the application process. You can also use these fairs to ask about programs for students or recent graduates, and an agency's hiring timeline. Keep in mind that most agencies don't make offers on the spot.

Social Media

In case you were wondering, yes, agencies use Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and other platforms to post information about their job opportunities.

Personal Networks

Friends and family with government connections are likely to have great advice for you on how to find open positions. Faculty members, professors, careers services offices, alumni associations and professional organizations on campus are also good places to get information about open government positions or contacts at

federal agencies.

WRITING A FEDERAL RESUME

Is your resume one page? That's fine for a private sector job. Your government resume, however, will need to have more detail, and it's likely to grow to two to five pages.

KEY COMPONENTS OF A FEDERAL RESUME

The best way to create a federal resume is to use the resume builder on the federal government's jobs website, USAJOBS. The resume builder will guide you through the whole process. And you don't have to stick with one. You can create a resume tailored to fit different positions you apply for. You can also create a searchable, master resume, so HR specialists can contact you if there's an opportunity that fits your skills and experience.

BUILDING A FEDERAL RESUME

Candidate Information

A federal resume will ask your citizenship status and most, but not all, positions require you to be a U.S. citizen. You're also asked if you've worked for the federal government before and if you qualify for veterans preference—that is, you've served on active duty in the Armed Forces.

Work Experience

Your resume should list all the relevant jobs you've held.

Required: Employer, location, title, start and end date, average hours worked per week, responsibilities and accomplishments for each job you list.

Optional: A supervisor(s) as a reference and salary, although not listing salary doesn't exclude resumes from consideration.

Education

Include information on the schools you attended and the relevant coursework you completed. Only list degrees from accredited schools, or programs that meet the Office of Personnel Management's standards. Provide as much information as possible to support that you're the best person for the job.

Required: Schools attended and degrees obtained.

Optional: Grade-point averages, relevant coursework, academic papers or projects, key presentations, honors received, other important accomplishments.

Optional Information

For the best shot at a position, provide as much pertinent information as possible in optional sections, including:

Job-Related Training: This could include classes, seminars, coursework, certifications or training that relates to the skills and experience the position requires.

References: Consider listing professional or personal references who can vouch for your character, work ethic and dependability—such as colleagues, classmates and mentors.

Language skills: Include the languages you have experience in, and your level of proficiency.

Affiliations: Use this to list professional associations, societies, clubs or other organizations you belong to and to highlight leadership roles and volunteer experiences you’ve had that relate to the position description.

Professional Publications: If you’ve been published, include the outlets you’ve contributed to, the publication names and the date your submissions were published.

Additional Information: You can add other relevant information, including awards, leadership activities, public speaking engagements or volunteer experience. You can also add your availability, the type of work environment you seek and your desired location. Even if your interests and desires don’t match the position’s needs, your resume will stay in the running.

A federal resume isn’t likely to be the only information you’ll have to provide when applying for a federal job. You’ll also probably find yourself answering multiple-choice questionnaires and writing essays all about you, you, you. What you’ve done. How you’ve excelled. You know the drill.

OTHER APPLICATION DOCUMENTS & MATERIALS

Some agencies may request even more information. For example, the State Department, requires applicants who want to become a foreign service officer to take the Foreign Service Exam—to prove they know a whole lot about world affairs and foreign leaders. (Interested? A Gen Z edition of Trivial Pursuit could be a fun starting point.)

APPLICATION QUESTIONNAIRES AND ESSAYS

How to answer application questionnaires

Questionnaires can be long. They can be short. And anywhere in-between. Typically, they have some combination of yes/no, true/false, multiple-choice and short essay questions. The questionnaire might appear in the job posting but usually you fill it out with your application.

Responses should mirror your resume. That is, if you’re asked to rate your experience with doing certain tasks, you should give the same or similar information that’s in your resume. Do the same thing when answering interview questions in person. You don’t get dinged for writing or saying the same thing. Think of it as a great way to reinforce your resume information.

Application Essays

Each job announcement lists certain qualifications, knowledge, skills and abilities the agency is seeking. If someone mentions “KSAs,” that’s what they’re talking about. Here’s the trick to writing essays describing yourself: Succinctly describe your experiences in a way that matches the qualifications listed in the opening. Focus on your direct contributions to your workplace and avoid acronyms in your descriptions.

An important point: Don’t use synonyms for the requested qualifications because you think it’s better not to parrot what the position description says. The opposite is true. The best thing you can do is repeat the “key words” and phrases found in the description. In fact, many organizations use computer programs

to look for exactly those words and may skip over the synonyms and assume you don’t have the qualifications the agency seeks. Repetition rather than rephrasing is, well, the key here.

Include as much information as possible pertaining to each qualification, even if the information is already in your resume, same as mentioned above for the questionnaires. Tell great stories by explaining the challenges you faced, what you did to address them and what results you achieved. Use real-life examples to describe the experiences, education and activities on your resume. Be the hero of your story!

OTHER COMMON APPLICATION MATERIALS

You may need to submit several documents or forms with your applications, including college transcripts, professional certifications or proof of noncompetitive status—a term that refers to jobs that are open only to certain applicant pools, such as veterans, people with disabilities or current or former federal employees. If your documents are not digital, you can mail or fax them separately in most cases.

Agencies may also request cover letters, letters of recommendation, writing samples or other materials. You should make sure each of these documents reinforces the knowledge, skills and abilities requested in the position description.

Transcripts

You may need to submit college transcripts to verify your degree or special coursework or superior academic achievement you describe in your resume. If you can’t get an official transcript, check with the HR contact on the job posting to see if the agency will accept unofficial documents.

Verification of Status

If you claim veterans preference or another type of “noncompetitive status,” you must submit documentation to verify your status. The forms required are usually listed in the job posting. USAJOBS also provides links to many forms.

INTERVIEWING FOR FEDERAL JOBS

It’s a win to get an interview, but a dozen or so applicants may be vying for the same position. Now’s the time to polish your interviewing skills because the final selection will be based on several rounds of interviews.

AWAITING THE INTERVIEW CALL

Some agencies send e-mails to kick off the interview process. Others call.

- If you are lucky enough to get an interview, make sure you get the following information in preparation:
- The caller’s name, title and agency.
- A return phone number.
- Confirmation of the job title (particularly if you have multiple applications pending).
- Time and date of the interview.
- Interview location or information for a virtual interview.
- Items to bring besides a resume, if any.
- Additional assessments the agency might ask for, such as a

writing test.

Job candidates should also try to learn the following from the person arranging the interview:

- Name(s) of interviewer(s).
- Type of interview.
- How to get into the building and through security, if it's an in-person interview, and how long it might take.
- Transportation information, including where to park or the closest Metro station.

TYPES OF GOVERNMENT INTERVIEWS

Agencies will typically interview you one-on-one or set up a panel of several people, although it's possible you'll do a phone or video interview.

One-on-One Interviews

Before an agency makes an offer, it will probably have you interview with a hiring manager or another decision-maker as well as other agency employees.

- Organizations use one-on-one interviews to determine how well you might interact with other people in the agency, and how your professional experiences have prepared you for the job.
- Other people may sit in during the interview.
- You should treat every interview as a new one, even if it seems like interviewers ask you the same questions every time. The information will be new and important to each interviewer.
- Some hiring managers use a “structured interview” format, that is, interviewers ask all applicants the same series of questions. You may notice this kind of interview seems more formal, since the interviewer essentially follows a script.
- Some agencies interview people at career fairs or other public events. These are generally one-on-one interviews. Treat them with as much professionalism as you would an interview in an office.

Panel Interviews

Some agencies prefer panel interviews, so several team members learn about the candidate at once. Panel interviews can be more efficient for the agency but may feel more intimidating to you. Deep breaths! You can do this. In panel interviews, you:

- Need to answer questions in ways that are relevant for different people with different responsibilities. In most cases you will know who will be on the panel in advance, so you can prepare in advance with their perspectives in mind.
- Have the opportunity to ask several people questions about the job and the organization to make sure the position is the right fit for you.
- Benefit from remembering panelists' names and addressing them by name, during the interview and when thanking them afterwards.

Phone Interviews

Many agencies do an initial phone screen to learn basic information about you before deciding whether to bring you in

for an interview.

Video Interviews

Agency interviewers who are on travel, or don't work near where you live, may set up a video conference and ask you join from a federal office building near you. If you're asked to interview via video, prepare and dress as you would for an in-person interview.

AFTER YOU APPLY

Federal agencies get hundreds of applications for each job, so you might not hear back right away. Get a snack! Stream some music! A response may show up when you least expect it.

AFTER THE APPLICATION PERIOD CLOSES

When the application period closes, it's time for the human resources office to read and assess every application. People in the HR office create a list of highly qualified candidates who, at minimum, meet the basic qualifications required and send it a selecting official, that is, the person who chooses candidates to interview.

Most agencies strive to fill their open positions within 80 days or sooner. Or sooner if they can. However, the average “time to hire” as it's often called, is still close to 100 days—although government strives to do better.

HOW TO TRACK AN APPLICATION

The agency notifies you at four points in the process (if you are being considered for the job):

- When the application is received.
- If someone meets the minimum qualifications.
- When the application is referred to agency official who will make a selection.
- When a job candidate is offered the position.

If you don't hear from someone within 15 to 20 days after the closing date, letting you know the agency got your application, you may want to get in touch with the agency contact listed in the job announcement. You can email or call to confirm that the agency received your application and verify that you completed the application materials as you were supposed to.

Always have a specific reason for calling. If the application period hasn't closed, for example, are you calling to request additional information? To make sure your application was received? To ask where to drop off a batch of freshly baked cookies? (No, that last one is not a good idea.)

While agency contacts are open to courteous inquiries, remember to respect their time. Answering these inquiries is probably not their primary role.

You also can track your application status through your USAJOBS account or the agency system you used to apply.

Reference the Announcement Number

Each job announcement has a reference number. Be sure to use that number when you communicate with an agency so someone there can quickly locate your application.

Captain Skyhawk

123 Skyhawk Drive | Martin, TN 38237 | 731.123.1234 | skyhawk@ut.utm.edu

Country of Citizenship: United States of America
Veterans' Preference: No
Highest Grade: GS-02-?, 06/20XX-08/20XX
Contact Current Employer: Yes

AVAILABILITY Job Type: Permanent
Temporary
Recent Graduate
Full Time
Work Schedule:

DESIRED LOCATIONS US-DC-Washington/Metro
US-VA-Northern

WORK EXPERIENCE Tennessee Cooperative Extension 9/20XX - present
Martin, TN US Salary: 20 USD per Hour
Hours per week: 40
Program Coordinator
- Oversee three mentoring programs in limited resource communities
- Recruit, train and manage 25 adult mentors and 30 youth
- Develop marketing and training materials for use in FMP programs and other county mentoring initiatives
- Write and manage program grants, hire outside contractors for grant implementation
- Communicate in Spanish with program participants and their families
- (Contact Supervisor: Yes, Supervisor's Name: Jan Doe, Supervisor's Phone: 731.123.1234)

U.S. Consulate (Department of State) 9/20XX - 12/20XX
Milan, Lombardy Italy Grade Level: NA
Hours per week: 45

Political and Economic Section Intern, NA
- Researched and wrote regional economic and political briefs for US Ambassador's Milan consulate district visits
- Worked with Italian professionals in regional chambers of commerce, banks, NGO's and government offices to compile briefs
- Utilized Italian language skills and political and cultural knowledge in a variety of settings
- (Contact Supervisor: yes, Supervisor's Name: John Doe, Supervisor's Phone: State Dept in Wash. DC)

Department of State (Educational and Cultural Affairs) 9/20XX - 8/20XX
Washington, DC US Grade Level: 02
Hours per week: 20

Intern, Public Affairs Assistant, GS
- Wrote articles in Bureau newsletter & press releases
- Supervised contractors on communications project
- Contacted and pitched media for program publicity
- Assembled financial and budget information for use in ECA material
- (Contact Supervisor: Yes, Supervisor's Name: Janet Doe, Supervisor's Phone: 202.123.1234)

FEDERAL RESUME SAMPLE P. 2

EDUCATION	University of Tennessee at Martin Martin, TN US Bachelor of Arts - 5/20XX 121 Semester Hours Major: International Studies Minor: Spanish GPA: 3.50 out of 4.0	
LANGUAGES	Japanese	
	Spoken:	Advanced
	Written:	Advanced
	Read:	Advanced
	Spanish	
	Spoken:	Advanced
	Written:	Advanced
	Read:	Advanced
AFFILIATIONS	National Japanese American Foundation	Member
REFERENCES	George Washington	UT Martin Professor, Italian Language & Literature 731.123.1234 gwash@pastpresidents.org Personal
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	Skills - Strong written and oral communication skills - Strong analytical abilities and problem solving capabilities - Grant writing experience (awarded “Dream Catchers” Program Grant by Community and Recreation Services, Fairfax County Government, Dec. 20XX - Regional expertise in Balkan, Post-Soviet and Western European political issues (including extensive regional travel and language capabilities) - Proficient in Microsoft Office programs Leadership and Service Roles Kaleidoscope Center for Cultural Fluency at UVA: Social Diversity Program, Director, Jun. 20XX - Aug. 20XX - Developed forums for dialogue between diverse student groups - Built partnerships between student groups through cultural programming Spanish Society at UT Martin, President, Sep. 20XX - May 20XX - Recruited executive committee members, planned meetings, managed a membership base of 40+ students - Organized club involvement in national Italian-American collegiate workshops and events - Created community events with local Italian businesses and restaurants Other Roles at UT Martin - Council of the College of Arts & Sciences: Spanish Department Representative: Sep. 20XX - May 20XX - Residence College: Academic Affairs, Committee Chair: Sep. 20XX - May 20XX - Literary & Debating Society: Member: Jan. 20XX - May 20XX - European Society: Culture Chair: Jan 20XX - Jan 20XX Weakley County: Martin, TN: Substitute Instructor, ESL: 20XX - 20XX	