



The federal government is the largest employer in the United States. Federal employees work in 15 cabinet-level agencies and over 100 independent agencies. The federal government has approximately 2000 different job classifications with more than half of all federal employees working in professional, management, business and financial occupations. For future federal employees, technical expertise as well as “soft skills” such as reasoning, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration will be highly sought.

Due to attrition including retirements and the need for new workers in “mission-critical” occupations, projections utilizing historical rates translate to over 200,000 occupation vacancies over the next few years. Up to 80 percent of these mission-critical positions will be focused in five professional fields, including security/protection/compliance/enforcement; medical/public health; accounting/budget/business; engineering/sciences; and program management/analysis/administration. Learn about working in the federal government utilizing the “Working in Government” link under the ‘Help’ feature at the bottom of the USAJOBS.gov website. Also, you may wish to check out “Working in our federal government” available at the Partnership for Public Service’s gogovernment.org website.

Keys to Success

- Develop a plan to achieve your federal career goal.

Focus on your long-term career goals. Identify federal agencies and employment opportunities for which you are qualified that match well with these career goals. Utilize online resources to identify types of occupations and what majors are hired for these occupations. Visit federal agency websites to learn about the agency, its mission, its objectives and its career opportunities. Identify local federal agency offices, and schedule informational interviews with the branch management. Attend federal forums hosted by the Career Center and on-campus Career Fairs to learn first-hand from agency representative about their opportunities and hiring practices. Schedule an appointment with a Career Center Advisor to assist you regarding federal employment.

- Utilize online resources.

An A-Z Index of US Government Department and Agencies is available on USA.gov. You can identify “Federal Occupations by College Major” available via the ‘Students and Recent Graduates’ link on USAJOBS.gov website. Find more information regarding opportunities that match your goals utilizing the ‘Find Your Fit’ feature available on gogovernment.org which allows you to browse by agency or by (occupation) field.

- Begin your search early.

Your identification of opportunities and the application process should begin 12 to 15 months prior to graduation or your desired start of employment date. This is true for both full time and internship opportunities. Many agency internship opportunities are closed out as early as October for the following summer. The competition for all positions will be significant, and the process can be lengthy, especially for opportunities requiring security clearances.

- Applying for opportunities.

USAJOBS.gov is the official search engine for federal jobs. Most government job openings are posted on this site and each job announcement includes details about duties, minimum qualifications, basic benefits, and application instructions. You will need to create an account. Utilize the listing under ‘Account’ at the bottom of the **USAJOBS.gov** homepage to create your account and also the Help Center feature under ‘Help’ for assistance and guidance. You can also refer to gogovernment.org’s ‘Find Your Fit’ page to access “How to search for federal jobs and internships on **USAJOBS.gov**” as well as other “How to ...” guidance.

Of special interest to students is the ‘[Students and Recent Graduates](#)’ link available on the **USAJOBS.gov** homepage. Current students will find Internships job postings via the ‘[Find Internship](#)’ link. Graduates and soon-to-be graduates can search for opportunities under the ‘[Find Recent Graduate Jobs](#)’ link.

Be aware! that many agencies, particularly those in the intelligence community and The State Department, do not post jobs on **USAJOBS.gov**. Go to your desired agency’s website and look for a Careers, Jobs, or a similarly worded tab to learn about careers, job postings, and application processes.

Take Advantage

Consider applying for any and all federal positions in which you are interested and for which you qualify within an agency or across agency boundaries. There is no penalty for doing so, and if not selected for one position, you have not lost time applying for others.

Be Aware!

There are multiple hiring processes, referred to as authorities, available for federal employment. Authorities of primary interest are: Competitive Service and Excepted Service. The Pathways Program provides excepted service authority for Students and Recent Graduates. In addition, there are unique hiring paths such as for veterans and for individuals with a disability that are featured on the ‘[Help Center](#)’ page of **USAJOBS.gov**.

Tips

1. Think of your federal resume as our initial step in the interview process. You will need to convince the evaluator that you are qualified. Then you will want the evaluator to establish your qualifications at the highest level your knowledge, skills, abilities, and experiences allows. Therefore, a federal resume can be more than one page. Three to five pages may be needed to tell your story.
2. Tailor your resume to the opportunity to boost your ranking as a qualified candidate. Identify and utilize key words and phrases from the Vacancy Announcement.
3. The Vacancy Announcement will identify the qualifications, requirements, and duties for the opportunity. Include information in your application that matches what is needed. Be precise and concise, not verbose.
4. Describe your experience with concrete words rather than general descriptions. For example, it is better to use “manage a team of 5 software engineers” rather than “responsible for managing, training...”.
5. Use words and phrases that define the level and scope of your experience and skills; for example, “write complex technical documents”; “prepare routine correspondence”; “speak before groups of 100 or more people”; “manage multi-thousand dollar budgets”; and “work with groups to build consensus”.
6. Use modifiers to define the frequency in which you perform tasks; i.e., occasionally, regularly, once or twice a year, monthly, weekly, daily, etc.
7. Translate jargon and acronyms specific to your major or experience to tie into job duties and qualifications listed.
8. Use specifics when describing your work experience or skills, such as the names of software you use and spoken language proficiency.
9. Highlight job-related training, skills, certificates, licenses, honors, awards, professional affiliations, leadership activities, community service, etc.
10. Be truthful!

Finally!

There are three “absolutes” regarding federal employment applications for which there are no exceptions or waivers.

1 You must be qualified for the opportunity.

2 Accurately complete the application requirements as directed. Be cognizant of the fact that certain federal agencies may have their own application template that may or may not accommodate your prepared resume.

3 Meet the application deadlines. Do not wait until the vacancy deadline, because agencies may close out a posting early if it is determined that sufficient applications have been received.