

FINDING A FEDERAL JOB

Have you ever considered working for the federal government? It may be a much better opportunity than you imagined. A common misperception is that the majority of federal jobs are located in Washington, D.C. You may be surprised to learn that 84% of federal jobs are located outside of our nation's capital in all 50 states and overseas. Additionally, pay is competitive with that of companies, and the federal government offers excellent benefits that may even include repayment of student loans. According to the Office of Personnel Management, there are 2.3 million federal civilian employees — and about a quarter of them are eligible for retirement. As these seasoned workers begin to retire, they will need to be replaced. Many federal departments lack the bench strength to fill these slots internally, so you just may be the ideal candidate.

Here are some tips for finding the federal job that is right for you:

1. Acquaint yourself with the landscape: Although we tend to think of the federal government as one gigantic entity, it actually comprises hundreds of agencies and departments, each with its own mission and culture. Take the time to identify those that are a good match for your interests, experience, and expertise. The government web portal [USAjobs.gov](https://www.usajobs.gov) is an excellent starting point to learn about federal agencies and the positions they need to fill. You can search the site by location, job type, department, or necessary skills.

Two other helpful sites, both sponsored by the Partnership for Public Service, are [The Best Places to Work in the Federal Government](https://www.bestplaceswork.com), which provides information about employee job satisfaction and engagement at more than 300 agencies, and [gogovernment.org](https://www.gogovernment.org), which describes public service jobs, including pay and duties, and advises you on how to apply.

2. Look for openings on the right sites: As you'll quickly learn, there are opportunities for people with all types of backgrounds and experience, from lawyers to supply management professionals

to scientists to engineers. All federal agencies are required to list their openings publicly and most do so on [USAjobs.gov](https://www.usajobs.gov). Some agencies prefer to post on their own sites, so be sure to check those too.

3. Engage your network: Use your circle of friends, colleagues, and former colleagues to gain a competitive advantage in your job search. Tools like LinkedIn can help you network with people and groups who work in or with the federal government. Talk to friends who are government employees to learn about openings and gain insight into the job application and interview processes. Also check with the Career Development Center to see with which government agencies we have established relationships.

4. Reformat your resume: The terminology used by the federal government in job descriptions can differ from what you'll find in the nonprofit and private sectors. Agencies often talk in government-speak, a language all its own. Be sure to analyze the keywords and phrases in federal job postings and incorporate them into your resume. Resumes for federal jobs will be longer than your traditional resume for industry jobs. [Gogovernment.org](https://www.gogovernment.org) nicely explains how to write a resume for a federal job listed on [USAjobs.gov](https://www.usajobs.gov).



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5. Be patient: It can take four months or longer to get a job offer. (Remember that this is the government and it's known for its bureaucracy). While federal agencies aim to fill most openings within 80 days, the actual time from application to hire often

runs 105 days, so be prepared to wait it out. Your patience could be well rewarded.

Below is a table of websites and links that are helpful in navigating how to find a federal job:

<p>Gogovernment.org Your one-stop shop for learning how to find a government job</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to consider, apply for, and secure federal employment • Research agencies and careers • Tips for completing application • Portals for students & entry-level talent, veterans, and people with disabilities • Browse by agency or field of interest • Review agency overview pages
<p>USAjobs.gov The official job site of the U.S. Federal Government, where you can search and apply for jobs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a personal profile • Create or upload up to five distinct resumes • Search for jobs by agency, occupation, location, and more • Save job searches and receive automatic notifications • Save jobs of interest • Learn about the Federal hiring process and special hiring programs
<p>https://www.usajobs.gov/StudentsAndGrads Pathways: For Students and Recent Graduates</p>	<p>Internship Program: For current students enrolled in a wide variety of higher educational institutions, with paid opportunities to work in agencies and explore federal careers while still in school</p> <p>Recent Graduates Program: For individuals who have recently graduated from qualifying educational institutions or programs and seek a dynamic career development program with training and mentorship</p> <p>Presidential Management Fellows Program: The government's premier leadership development program for advanced degree candidates</p>
<p>https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/repay-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/public-service Student Loan Forgiveness</p>	<p>If you are employed by a government or nonprofit organization, you may be able to receive loan forgiveness under the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program.</p>
<p>Bestplacetowork.org A comprehensive rating of employee satisfaction and commitment across federal government agencies and their subcomponents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rankings on the best places to work in the federal government, produced by the Partnership for Public Service • Includes the views of more than 433,300 civil servants from 391 federal organizations on a wide range of workplace topics. • Rankings are by category (e.g. culture, work/life balance, etc.), demographics, occupation, and agency.
<p>https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/2016/general-schedule/ Government Salaries</p>	<p>Learn about the salary structure for a government job.</p> <p>Students graduating with a Bachelor's degree will fall in the G7 category. Students graduating with a Master's degree will fall in the G9 category. There is the ability to negotiate between steps in a grade.</p>
<p>https://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/healthcare/enrollment/new-federal-employee-enrollment/</p>	<p>Federal health insurance and retirement benefits</p>
<p>https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/veterans-employment-initiative/vet-guide/ For Veterans</p>	<p>Veterans get preferred status when applying for a federal job. In 2014, nearly one-third of all new federal hires were veterans.</p>

Writing a Resume for a Federal Job

On [USAjobs.gov](https://www.usajobs.gov), you may use either the Resume Builder or the Resume Uploader to create your resume.

- You may create up to 5 federal resumes, each tailored to a type of position.
- You may upload your private sector resume to your Saved Documents folder.
- Focus on the specific duties section of the job vacancy announcement and customize your resume to it, including key buzz words.
- Expect that your federal resume will be much longer than an industry resume (up to 5 pages).

What Makes a Federal Job Application Stand Out?

- Convey leadership whenever you can on your resume and cover letter and in interviews.
- Network and conduct informational interviews with other federal employees in agencies of interest, or in the agency to which you are applying.
- Demonstrate strong communication skills, both written and oral.
- Highlight strong teamwork experiences and show the impact you made on the team.
- Write a strong cover letter. It will be read and is the best opportunity to show your leadership style and experience.
- Ground your experiences whenever you can in facts or measurable results.
- Include volunteer experiences on your resume.

What Happens Once You Apply for a Federal Job?

Once you apply for a federal job, it often feels like you have been forgotten, but much is happening behind the scenes. The process can take several months from application to hire.

The Tracking Process

Your application for a federal job will be tracked at four points in the process:

- When application is received (receipt is confirmed to candidate)
- When determination is made on candidate meeting the basic qualifications for job (candidate is contacted for additional information/documentation)
- When application is referred to selected official (candidate is interviewed)
- When candidate is offered position

The Post Application Process

- Position closes
- Agency evaluates qualifications
- Agency produces certificates of qualified candidates
- Certificate is provided to selecting official and interview process begins
- Interviews ensue
- Final interviews occur
- Selection is made

Types of Interviews

- One-on-One
- Telephone



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- Panel
- Virtual

To prepare for a federal job interview, candidates should practice the STAR approach to behavioral questions. Use the CDC's **Interview Process Tipsheet** to learn more about this approach.

What is the Difference between a Background Check and Security Clearance?

At least one of these processes will occur if you get offered a federal job. The type of position you get will dictate whether a background check or security clearance will be conducted. These are the types of federal positions out there:

- Non-Sensitive: Minimum background check
- Public Trust: Low risk, moderate risk, high risk
- National Security: Top secret, secret, confidential

Background Check (Non-Sensitive roles)

- Includes a review of individual's criminal background and credit history
- The Office of Personnel Management conducts 90% of these checks
- "Questionnaire for Non-Sensitive Positions" (Standard Form 85) is used
- "Questionnaire for Public Trust Positions" (Standard Form 85P) is used

Security Clearance

- A much more extensive review of the individual's background is conducted, including character and behavioral patterns
- The Agency's decision on whether to grant clearance is based on investigations.
- "Questionnaire for National Security Positions" (Standard Form 86) is used

Types of Security Clearances

- Confidential
- Secret
- Top Secret
- Sensitive Compartmental Information
- Find out more: http://gogovernment.org/how_to_apply/next_steps/security_clearance.php

In Summary

The government is a great place to work and offers opportunities in a diverse and wide range of fields as well as locations. The application process is more involved and will require a different and longer resume, and the process will likely take longer than that in industry. Expect an average of three months from application to hire. Due to an anticipated large number of retirements, the government projects a large number of openings over the next 10 years. You can find a suitable and fulfilling position with tremendous benefits by working for the federal government.

Career Development Center
Project Center
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