

Federal Job Applications

Have you ever considered a career in public service with the U.S. Government? If you answered, “Yes” to this question, then a career in the Federal sector might be right for you! Please note that the Federal Government application process can be different than the private industry, so this handout has been created to assist with understanding this process.

Finding Federal Job Postings

The best place to search for Federal opportunities is by visiting the USAJobs website. This is the official U.S. Government site where Federal jobs are posted. You may access USAJobs at the following website: www.usajobs.gov. Also, STUDENTJobs provides entry-level opportunities within the Federal Government for students, and can be accessed at the following website: www.studentjobs.gov.

--- Federal Jobs by College Major: www.usajobs.gov/EI23.asp

--- Best Places to Work in the Federal Government: <http://data.bestplacetowork.org>

Helpful Tips About USAJobs

Here are some helpful tips to keep in mind when searching and applying for Federal Government positions on USAJobs:

- **Accurately Follow Instructions.** One very important aspect of Federal job searching is carefully following application instructions in the job vacancy announcement. While this tip may seem obvious, this is still a major issue with the final application submissions and could impede your ability to obtain an interview.
- **Do Not Make Job Search Too Narrow.** Make sure you do not make your job search categories too narrow in USAJobs. Keep in mind all possible fields that might be related to the area you are seeking.
- **Understand Job Titles and Pay Grades.** Different job titles can match your areas of interest, but under a job title you may not recognize. Make sure to carefully read job duties for positions posted. For example, a program analyst is a researcher and writer.
- **Create Resume in Advance/Upload Resume.** Create a resume including all your work experiences and educational history following the Federal sample resumes before creating your USAJobs’ resume (visit Career Services at: www.csufresno.edu/careers for samples). Include “KSAs” (see below about KSAs) in your resume descriptions. Click on “My USAJobs” icon, create an account and copy and paste your resume information.
- **Limit Job Search Locations.** To begin your job search, click on “Search Jobs” tab on the top navigations bar. Be sure to limit the location to your desired geographical place. If you are open to moving anywhere in the U.S., then click on “Select All.” You can narrow your job destination to a few locations and counties in California by holding down “Ctrl” key, or just focus on Fresno County.

Student Career Opportunities in the Federal Government

There are various internships, temporary employment, and career opportunities for college students and recent college graduates within the Federal Government. The Federal sector offers the Student Educational Employment Program for students who are enrolled or accepted for enrollment at a degree granting institution; encouraging students of different ages to gain valuable work experience while attending school. This program is divided into the **Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP)**, and the **Student Career Experience Program (SCEP)**.

These programs are open to high school, vocational and technical, associate degree, undergraduate, graduate, and professional school students.

Programs While in School

- **Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP):**
 - Temporary, paid program providing maximum flexibility with work schedules in part-time and full-time opportunities
 - Does not have to be related to students' academic field
 - Temporary work can last for a Summer or one's entire college career
- **Student Career Experience Program (SCEP):**
 - Job opportunity that is paid and gives full benefits
 - Related to students' academic/career goals and can count for academic internship hours
 - Some agencies may help subsidize academic costs
 - Upon internship and academic coursework completion, priority is given in consideration for available federal positions without completing regular interview process
- **Summer Internship Program (SIP):**
 - Summer employment opportunity to work with Federal Government officials in different sectors and positions
 - To find summer vacancies, one can visit: www.studentjobs.gov or call **703-724-1850** or TDD **978-461-8404** for automated recordings of current job vacancies

Programs Upon Graduation

- **Career Intern Program (CIP):**
 - Paid, full-benefited and full-time experience; two-year commitment allowing one to gain federal government experience
 - Offers wages starting at GS-5 through GS-9 given a 3.0 GPA or higher
 - Best applicants are students with six months left to graduate or recent college graduates

In addition, for more information about student programs and the application process, please visit: www.usajobs.gov/faqs.asp. More Federal programs and internship-related information can be found at: www.makingthedifference.org. Click on the "Federal Internships" tab, and then on "Federal Student Employment Programs" on the left-hand side. Also, if you are interested in opportunities with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), you may contact Roberto González, Jr. (USDA-HSI Regional Director / Central-Northern California). His office is located at Fresno State in the Peters Building, Room 224 and can be reached via e-mail: rogonzalez@csufresno.edu or telephone: (559) 278-8311.

Salary Benefits

Typically bachelor's level graduates can potentially start at GS-5 to GS-9 which currently begins at about \$32,000 to \$46,000 and can work up to GS-12 which pays approximately \$68,000. The Federal Government uses the term "GS" or "General Schedule" to refer to salary benefits. GS pay scale is used to ensure the U.S Government is using an equal measure of pay throughout each Federal sector. Also, pay scale salaries might be geographically higher due to the "Locality Pay Area."

Here is a further break down of current GS levels, and depending on education and experience you can find the level you might enter and corresponding annual salaries:

- **GS-5:** \$32,000 (college graduate with little or not experience)
- **GS-7:** \$38,000 (college superior academic achievement or graduate level)
- **GS-9:** \$46,000 (Master's or 2nd year of graduate level)
- **GS-11:** \$56,000 (Doctoral or 3rd year of graduate level)
- **GS-12:** \$68,000 (Specialized experience and GS-11 equivalent level)

Also, if you are part of any “Honors Societies” or have at least a 3.0 GPA and above, you could start at a GS-7 or higher, which is currently starting at about \$38,000; translating into a higher level, rather than the entry-level. So, keep working hard in school because the Federal Government awards individuals with high academic achievement. In addition, if you have a Master’s degree or are in your 2nd year of graduate school, you could start at GS-9 level or higher. To view the most recent GS pay scale chart, please visit the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) website at: www.opm.gov/oca/09tables/index.asp.

Federal Employee Benefits

There are many benefits to being a Federal employee. As a public servant you will be able to enjoy these great benefits:

- **Annual Leave (Vacation)**
 - 13 days of paid vacation per year during the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year
 - 20 days each year from the 3rd to the 15th year
 - After the 15th year, there are 26 days of paid vacation earned each year
- **Sick Leave**
 - Employees also earn 13 days of sick leave each year
- **Holidays**
 - Employees receive time-off, with pay, on 10 Federal Holidays
- **Flexible Time Work Options**
 - Various flexible work schedules exist and are negotiable with different federal agencies

For further information about federal benefits, please visit the USAJobs website at: www.usajobs.gov/EI61.asp for a more “Working for the Federal Government” detailed description of benefits.

Federal Application – Writing the Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs)

Unlike the private sector, Federal Government applications require applicants to provide very detailed information in a specific format commonly called “KSAs” and defined as:

- **K = Knowledge:** statements that refer to an organized body of information usually of a factual or procedural nature.
- **S = Skills:** statements that refer to the proficient manual, verbal or mental manipulation of data or things; skills can readily be measured.
- **A = Abilities:** statements that refer to the power to perform an observable activity at the present time.
- **Other Characteristics...** are mental or physical attributes or characteristics that don’t fall under the other areas (i.e. proactive, copes well in stressful environments, reliability, multiple work assignments).

KSA Do’s

- Use active verbs to describe past work experiences
- Use lots of examples
- Organize experiences in chronological order (i.e. most recent experience first, then further back experiences)
- Show results and increases in production to show progress

KSA Don'ts

- Don't use same KSAs for non-related fields or jobs (create a new application for each job to which you apply)
- Don't use position descriptions
- Don't exaggerate
- Don't be humble
- Don't describe work of organization or other people's work
- Don't make application a challenge to reader (have good grammar). Hard to read applications go in the "out" pile first

Writing Stellar KSAs

Remember that your application for the Federal Government provides a way for recruiters to sample your writing skills. As having effective communication skills is an important component as a public servant. Also, as you begin crafting your responses for your Federal application, here are some key elements to keep in mind:

- ***Write KSAs in Short Essays.*** Write short essays based on one or two good examples for each KSA. Give specific examples of education, training, awards, honors, paid and unpaid work experience that support each KSA. The length of your past experience descriptions using KSAs should be between half a page and a full page.
- ***Read Announcements Carefully.*** Analyze the announcements carefully for keywords and government lingo. Highlight these key words and use them when writing your KSAs.
- ***Focus on Mission.*** Focus on the mission of the agency of interest and translate your experiences into terms that would make sense for that Federal agency.
- ***Use First Person.*** Write in the first person (*I did...*).
- ***Do Not Abbreviate.*** Avoid using acronyms to describe courses, programs, systems or anything else.

Additionally, make sure to tailor your KSAs to each Federal job application. You can also refer to the following websites for KSA examples and tips by visiting:

www.usajobs.gov/infocenter/resumetips.asp,
www.makingthedifference.org/federaljobs/ksawriting.shtml, or
www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/about/employment.html#KSAs.

Additional Job Resources:

Federal Book Resources...

- *Federal Resume Guidebook* by Kathryn Kraemer Troutman
- *The Book of U.S. Government Jobs* by Dennis B. Damp
- *Ten Steps to a Federal Job* by Kathryn Kraemer Troutman

Note: The "Federal Job Applications" handout was created in collaboration with the USDA-HSI National Program and Fresno State Partnership.

If you have any questions about applying for Federal jobs or would like career assistance, please schedule an appointment with a Career Services' counselor by calling: (559) 278-2381. We are located in the Joyal Administration Building, Room 256.