FEDERAL JOB SEARCH TIPS

BENEFITS OF A FEDERAL JOB

1. The Nation's Largest Employer is Hiring
In the next five years, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) projects that by 2016, 40 percent of all current federal employees will retire, that's a lot of job openings!

2. You Can Make a Difference
The work of government employee impacts the lives of every American. You can play a vital role in addressing pressing issues, from homelessness to homeland security.

3. There's a Job for Every Interest
There are jobs suited to every interest and skill. Combine your skills and interests, for example, use your accounting background to improve your environment.

4. The Federal Government Can Help Pay for School
Federal agencies may help you pay back up to $10,000 per year of your student loans. Some agencies may pick up the tab if you decide to pursue a graduate degree.

5. You Can Advance Quickly
Federal agencies offer excellent training and development opportunities. There are a number of "fast track" possibilities for advancement within your field.

6. There are Federal Jobs around the Country & World
Nearly 85 percent of federal jobs are located outside of the greater metropolitan Washington, D.C. area and more than 50,000 federal employees work abroad.

7. The Federal Government Values Diversity
The federal government has steadily increased the diversity of its workforce with agencies actively encouraging minorities and individuals with disabilities to consider a variety of internship and fellowship programs.

8. Federal Jobs Pay Better Than You Think
Average government salaries are competitive for most professions. Pay can increase pretty quickly for top candidates with strong education and experience.

9. Benefits Encourage Work-Life Balance
Federal benefits, including health insurance, retirement and vacation, are extremely competitive with the private sector.

10. The Federal Government Is a Career Builder
Advance your career by developing highly marketable skills. Utilize your federal experiences as a building block for an exciting and diverse career.

Resource: http://gogovernment.org/

GETTING STARTED: FINDING FEDERAL JOBS

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is a good place to start your search. By law, most government agencies must post any vacancies open to outside applicants on their Web site, **USAJOBS.gov**. Because not all government jobs are posted on USAJOBS, however, it's also important to visit the websites of those agencies with which you might like to work.

USAJOBS TIPS

Much like the likes of Monster.com, Idealist.org and Racer Tracks, the federal government maintains its own job search site, **USAJOBS.gov**.

- Click on "Search Jobs" button on USAJOBS homepage to find central job search screen. Here, you can sort and search through federal jobs by geographic location, job category, pay grade or salary, or entering a key word that you think might be found in a job you're interested in.
- **Key Word Search** helps you narrow your search to only those positions that fit your expertise and experience. If you're looking for a job with a specific title (e.g., electrical engineer), type that into this box and the search will only show you jobs that match your description.
- **Location** allows you to see positions that are open in a specific place.
- **Job Category Search** is a way to tailor the listings to your personal skills and interests.
- **Salary Range and Pay Grade Range (GS) Search** lets you eliminate jobs above or below your level of expertise and education.
  - **Bachelor's degree** = GS-5 through GS-7 levels
  - **Master's degree** = Begin your search at the GS-9 level
  - If you have an extensive work record, these guidelines may not be quite right; keep searching with the Pay Grade Range until you find a level that you think best fits your education and experience.
- Applicant Eligibility assesses a range of federal jobs available to you. If you're not sure whether or not you can answer "yes," or are not sure what some of the terms mean, leave the "no" option selected.

Once you've set up the search just the way you want it, click "Search for Jobs" at the bottom of the page, sorting results by keyword or date and viewing either a brief of detailed description.

If you find a job you're interested in, read the description carefully to make sure that you're eligible to apply and to learn how to begin the application process.

MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY

CAREER SERVICES
100 OAKLEY APPLIED SCIENCE BUILDING | 270.809.3735
MURRAYSTATE.EDU/CAREER
@MSUCSO

Once you're happy with the way your search is set up, you should consider clicking on the "Save this search and email me jobs" link at the bottom of the page. This will allow you to receive daily, weekly, bi-weekly or monthly emails that will contain all the new jobs that meet your criteria. To use this feature, you'll have to create an account on the USAJOBS Web site, simply click on the box that says "Create your account now" and fill in the necessary information.

FIND A JOB IN YOUR REGION

- Review the Blue Pages of your phone book
- Contact the Federal Executive Office (**feb.gov**) that coordinates federal offices for your region
- Use Fedscope (**fedscope.opm.gov**) to research which agencies are in your state and whether they hire people with your background by clicking on "employment" and the most recent data (month/year) on the federal workforce

GETTING STARTED: THE APPLICATION PROCESS

After selecting the job to which you'd like to apply, we encourage you to consider the following tips:

- **Plan ahead**: The application process itself can take time; to improve your chances of getting a job, be sure to allow plenty of time to thoroughly complete your application.
- **Be selective**: Applications tailored for specific jobs that are a good match for your skills and talents will be more successful than sending out a standard résumé for many jobs. Read about building your federal résumé and KSA writing before you apply: **makingthedifference.org/federaljobs/ksa.shtml**
- **Prepare for a wait**: It can take weeks to months before you will hear back about an application and there may be little or no communication from the agency. Every federal job requires a background check before being offered the position. If the position is related to national security, you will be instructed to complete the security clearance process once you receive an offer. This can prolong this time period. Apply for positions without security clearances about four months prior to your start date and six to eight months in advance for national security related positions.
- **Follow-up with the agency**: Contact the identified representative to learn the status of an application or to find out more about a job about a month after the closing date. If the closing date is extended, follow-up about a month after you turned in your application.

THE APPLICATION

To apply, you must usually submit:

- A résumé
- A description of relevant knowledge
- Your knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) essays, other essays or online questionnaire (depending on what the application asks for)
- Additional supporting information called for in the vacancy announcement

FEDERAL RÉSUMÉ

You can edit and store up to five federal résumés at **usajobs.gov**. Although there is no mandated form, federal résumés require more detail than standard résumés. A recent graduate's federal résumé can be two to three pages long!

Essentials include:

- Information about the opening
- Your personal information
- Education and coursework levels
- Work experience
  (including dates of employment, number of hours worked per week, location of position and a supervisor's contact information)
- Other qualifications
- Agencies also request eligibility information including:
  - Past or current federal employment
  - Veteran qualifications
  - Non-competitive appointment: PeaceCorps/AmeriCorps

BUILDING YOUR RÉSUMÉ USING USAJOBS

After you click on the "Create a Resume" button and register with the USAJOBS Web site, you'll see that the resume-building process has four basic steps: Getting Started, Experience, Related Information, and Finishing Up. At any point during this process, you can click the "Save For Later" button at the bottom of the page and return to your resume at a later time. As you complete the resume building process, keep an eye out for blue circles with question marks inside, as these can help explain the step you're working on.

Getting Started
On the Getting Started page, you'll be asked for your basic contact information. Be sure to fill out all of those boxes marked with a red asterisk — they're mandatory. The one major decision you face here is whether to make your resume confidential or non-confidential. Marking your resume as confidential will prevent federal recruiters from easily learning your current contact information and employer. If a federal recruiter is interested in your resume, they'll send you a message through USAJOBS and you'll have the option to give them that information. Marking your resume as confidential will not hide the entire document from federal recruiters — you'll have the chance to do that later.

Experience
The Experience section is where you will list your career experience and educational achievements. Fill out both the work experience and education sections with a single record at a time. Once you click "Add Work Experience" or "Add Education" buttons, you'll be able to add information about other jobs you may have had or schools you may have attended. At the bottom of the Experience page, there's an optional section that will allow you to list any job related training you may have had. If you've taken relevant courses or attended valuable training sessions, be sure to include them here!

Related Information
The Related Information tab provides another opportunity for you to add information about yourself that recruiters may value. List personal and professional references, languages you speak, organizations to which you belong, publications to which you have contributed and awards which you have received on this page.

Toward the bottom of the page, you'll notice that the site asks you what type of employment you'd be willing to consider. This choice may seem daunting at first, but don't fret — if you click the question mark next to the word "Availability," you'll find short descriptions of each of these job types. Read these descriptions and you'll be able to make an informed decision about what sort of job you're looking for.

Below the "Availability" section, you'll find the "Desired Locations" box that will allow you to let federal recruiters know of any geographic preferences you have. Feel free to select as many or as few locations as you like.

Finishing Up

Once you click through to the Finishing Up page, you'll have the option to automatically spell-check your resume. This is a good idea since spelling errors reflect poorly on job applicants. This is also a good time to click the "Preview Your Resume" button along the left side of the page. You'll be able to see your resume just as federal recruiters will see it.

After you're satisfied with the shape your resume is in, click the "Activate Resume" button. This will send your resume out into the pool of other applicants and allow federal recruiters to find it in their searches.

Whether you decide to make your resume searchable or not, you'll be able to use it if you find a position on USAJOBS that accepts online applications. Look for the "Apply Online" button at the bottom of a job posting to see if the position you're interested in qualifies. If you decide to submit your resume electronically, make sure to read the job description carefully to ensure that all of the information that it asks for is included in your resume.

Resource: makingthedifference.org/federaljobs/usajobsresume.shtml

KSA FACTORS

KSAs, an acronym for Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities, are a set of questions to help determine if you are a good fit for a job, based on (you guessed it!) your combined set of job-related knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Vacancy announcements list the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities an agency wants to see in a candidate. In your application you need to describe in writing how your experiences match the desired KSA factors. KSAs are very important to federal employers. So, be sure to include as much information as you can that responds to each KSA factor, even if that information is already included on your federal résumé.

Isn't My Résumé Enough?

In a word, no. A résumé is an important component of the job application process, but addressing the KSAs listed in a federal job opening gives you an extra chance to draw attention to your strengths and expand upon the specific factors the agency is looking for. Don't exclude anything from your KSA responses just because it is on your résumé.

Decoding KSAs

Think of KSAs as a set of interview questions. This way, you can look at the KSAs as an opportunity to use real-life examples to sell the experiences, education, and activities listed on your résumé. Below are examples of real job openings and their associated KSAs from USAJobs.gov, plus a question that an interviewer might ask to get at the same information.

EXCEPTED SERVICE

Excepted service is a special authority used by the federal government, which allows agencies to use a streamlined hiring process rather than hiring through the traditional competitive process. This authority allows agencies to help meet an unusual or special hiring need. Agencies can use this authority to individuals with backgrounds in highly needed or hard to recruit areas of government, like attorneys, chaplains, medical doctors, etc., because for these types of jobs it is often impractical to use standard qualification requirements in order to rate applicant using a traditional competitive process.

Job Announcement	…Includes a KSA That Reads	…Which is Like an Interviewer Asking
Park Ranger GS 7	Knowledge of recreation site operation and maintenance techniques and ability to apply them to work.	"I see you volunteered regularly at the regional nature center during your four years in college, and that you worked as a life guard for a few summers. What did you learn in those experiences and how would you apply it to this job?"
Microbiologist GS 7-9	Knowledge of safety procedures and safe handling of hazardous biological agents.	"What experience do you have working in a lab with hazardous biological agents? If somebody in your lab accidentally knocked over a hazardous sample, what procedures would you follow?"
Intelligence Specialist GS-9	Skill at making presentations in front of a group.	"Tell me about a time when you had to make a persuasive argument, perhaps for a class project or internship. Tell me about another time when you had to make a presentation for a large audience and the tools and techniques you used."

The excepted service authority is also used to fill a job under a special circumstance; for example, when there is a part-time or temporary job in a remote location or when there is a critical hiring need. U.S. Office of Personnel Management may also use a special hiring authority on a case-by-case basis to make a political appointment. Special hiring authorities can also be used to hire applicants with a special disability.

Certain excepted service hiring programs also are used as fast-track ways to bring talented individuals in at the entry levels, such as the Presidential Management Fellows Program. These programs include training and development components and are typically two-years in duration, with the potential for conversion to a full-time permanent position.

Excepted service positions are not required to be posted on **USAJOBS.gov**. As a result, it is important to look at individual agency Websites for job announcements.

MAJOR EXCEPTED SERVICE AGENCIES

Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts: uscourts.gov/Careers.aspx
Agency for International Development (USAID): usaid.gov/careers
Central Intelligence Agency (CIA): cia.gov/careers
Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA): www.dia.mil/careers/
Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI): fbijobs.gov/
Federal Reserve System: federalreserve.gov/careers
Government Accountability Office (GAO): gao.gov/careers
Military Sealift Command (MSC): www.msc.navy.mil/n1/
National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA): www1.nga.mil/careers
National Security Agency (NSA): nsa.gov/careers
Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC): http://www.nrc.gov/about-nrc/employment.html
Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA): tva.com/employment/
Transportation Security Administration (TSA): http://www.tsa.gov/careers
U.S. Court of Federal Claims: www.uscfc.uscourts.gov/job-opportunitiesemployment
U.S. Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA): http://dodea.edu/Offices/HR/index.cfm
U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS): dhs.gov/careers-dhs
U.S. Department of State and **U.S. Mission to the United Nations**: careers.state.gov/
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA): va.gov/jobs/
U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO): careers.uspto.gov/
U.S. Postal Service (USPS): http://about.usps.com/careers
U.S. Secret Service, Uniformed Division (USSS): www.secretservice.gov/join/apply_events.shtml
Complete List of Federal Agencies: bestplacestowork.org

COMPETITIVE SERVICE

There are two main ways to enter the federal civil service—through an excepted service appointment or through a competitive process. Regardless of whether you are applying for an excepted or competitive position, what is important to recognize is that it is typical for hundreds and even thousands of individuals to apply to any one position, so take care in reading the details of the application and make sure you are addressing everything that is asked for.

Competitive Civil Service

Competitive civil service jobs are filled according to a merit system where the best qualified candidates are chosen based on an application and interview process. Managers can hire a current federal employee (promotion or transfer) or may choose to hire someone from outside the federal government.

Non-Competitive Status

Individuals who have committed to serving the country through certain programs are eligible, upon completion of the program, to be non-competitively appointed to a position in the federal government (i.e., they do not have to go through the regular competitive hiring civil service hiring process).

- AmeriCorps*VISTA members must serve one year in order to be eligible for non-competitive status
- PeaceCorps volunteers must first commit two years to the Peace Corps before receiving non-competitive status

Eligibility for non-competitive status is for a one-year period following their departure from the program. In some cases, that eligibility can be extended for up to two additional years if the person first goes into the military or an institution of higher learning after leaving the Peace Corps or VISTA.

VETERANS' PREFERENCE & DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

If you are a veteran, you may be eligible for something called Veterans' Preference, which provides assistance in competing for a federal job. If you have a disability, it is helpful to know that the government makes it a priority to provide reasonable accommodations to individuals with disabilities.

Veterans' Preference

Veterans' Preference was established by Congress to recognize those who have served our country and, in doing so, have suffered economic loss and, in some cases, have become disabled. It is designed to give veterans extra assistance in competing for a federal job.

Typically veterans must have served on active duty for at least two years during a period of war or be disabled in order to be eligible for Veterans' Preference. Veterans receive an additional 5 to 10 points which is added to their score on the competitive civil service examination. Veterans' preference does not guarantee the veteran a job.

Veterans preference information: fedshirevets.gov

Disability Accommodations
Federal agencies provide reasonable accommodations to individuals with disabilities, as long as you meet the job qualifications. Some of the accommodations provided include:

- TTYs for use with telephones
- Hardware and software that make computers accessible if you have vision impairments or difficulty using your hands
- Sign language interpreters or readers
- Training and other written materials in an alternative formats (e.g., braille, audio tape, computer disk)
- Physical changes, such as installing a ramp or modifying a workspace

SECURITY CLEARANCES

Agencies that require security clearances

Everyone hired for a federal job undergoes a basic background check of their criminal and credit histories.

In addition, jobs that include access to sensitive information generally require a security clearance, which requires a more intensive background investigation that begins after someone has already received a job offer. Examples of agencies which may require high levels of security clearance include the following:

- U.S. State Department
- Intelligence Community (e.g., CIA, FBI)
- U.S. Agency for International Development
- Department of Defense
- National Nuclear Security Administration

Security Clearance Process

Federal jobs that involve access to sensitive information often require a security clearance. There is a four-step process which includes receiving the job offer, a basic background check of your criminal and credit history. About 90% of background investigations go through one agency, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

The hiring agency makes the ultimate decisions about the job offer and granting clearance and therefore dictates how long these steps will take. OPM's Web site answers many questions about the rest of the process.

Resource: makingthedifference.org/federaljobs/securityclearances.shtml

Tips for smooth security clearance process

- Ensure your package is complete with properly rolled fingerprints.
- Follow up after a reasonable interval (roughly a month) if you have not heard back.
- It may be possible to work for the agency in a nonsensitive position (also referred to as a "low public trust") while you wait for the security clearance. Ask your agency for details.
- Prepare in advance: know the kinds of questions that will be asked of you as you seek to get a security clearance.
- Keep track of where you live and a contact who knew you when you lived at each place. This is especially important if you study abroad, because it's often hard to reestablish contact with someone overseas if you no longer have up-to-date contact information.
- Consider a summer internship with an agency that requires a security clearance. If you need a security clearance after graduation, getting an updated clearance will be considerably faster than the initial investigation.

FEDERAL RÉSUMÉ PAGE 1

Abraham Lincoln
1111 President Drive | Washington, DC 20005
202.200.2222 | alinconln@pastpresidents.com

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 Promotion, Federal Career Intern

Work Schedule: Full Time

DESIRED LOCATIONS

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

WORK EXPERIENCE

Kentucky Cooperative Extension
Murray, KY US
9/20XX - 4/20XX
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: 270.123.1234)

U.S. Consulate (Department of State)
Milan, Lombardy Italy
9/20XX - present
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)
Washington, DC US
9/20XX - 8/20XX
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 RÉSUMÉ PAGE 2

EDUCATION

Murray State University
Murray, KY US
Bachelor of Arts - 5/20XX
121 Semester Hours
Major: Foreign Affairs, Italian Language (Double Major)
GPA: 3.50 out of 4.0

LANGUAGES

Italian

	Advanced
Spoken:	Advanced
Written:	Advanced
Read:	

Spanish

	Advanced
Spoken:	Advanced
Written:	Advanced
Read:	

AFFILIATIONS

National Italian American Foundation — Member

REFERENCES

George Washington
MSU
Professor, Italian Language & Literature
Phone Number: 270.123.1234
Email Address: gwash@pastpresidents.org
Reference Type: 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, Sep. 20XX - May 20XX

- Developed forums for dialogue between diverse student groups
- Built partnerships between student groups through cultural programming

Societa Italiana (Italian Society) at MSU, 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 Murray State University

- Council of the College of Arts & Sciences: Italian 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

Calloway County: Murray, KY: Substitute Instructor, ESL: 20XX - 20XX