

# How to get a job in the Federal Government

by **Olivia Crosby**

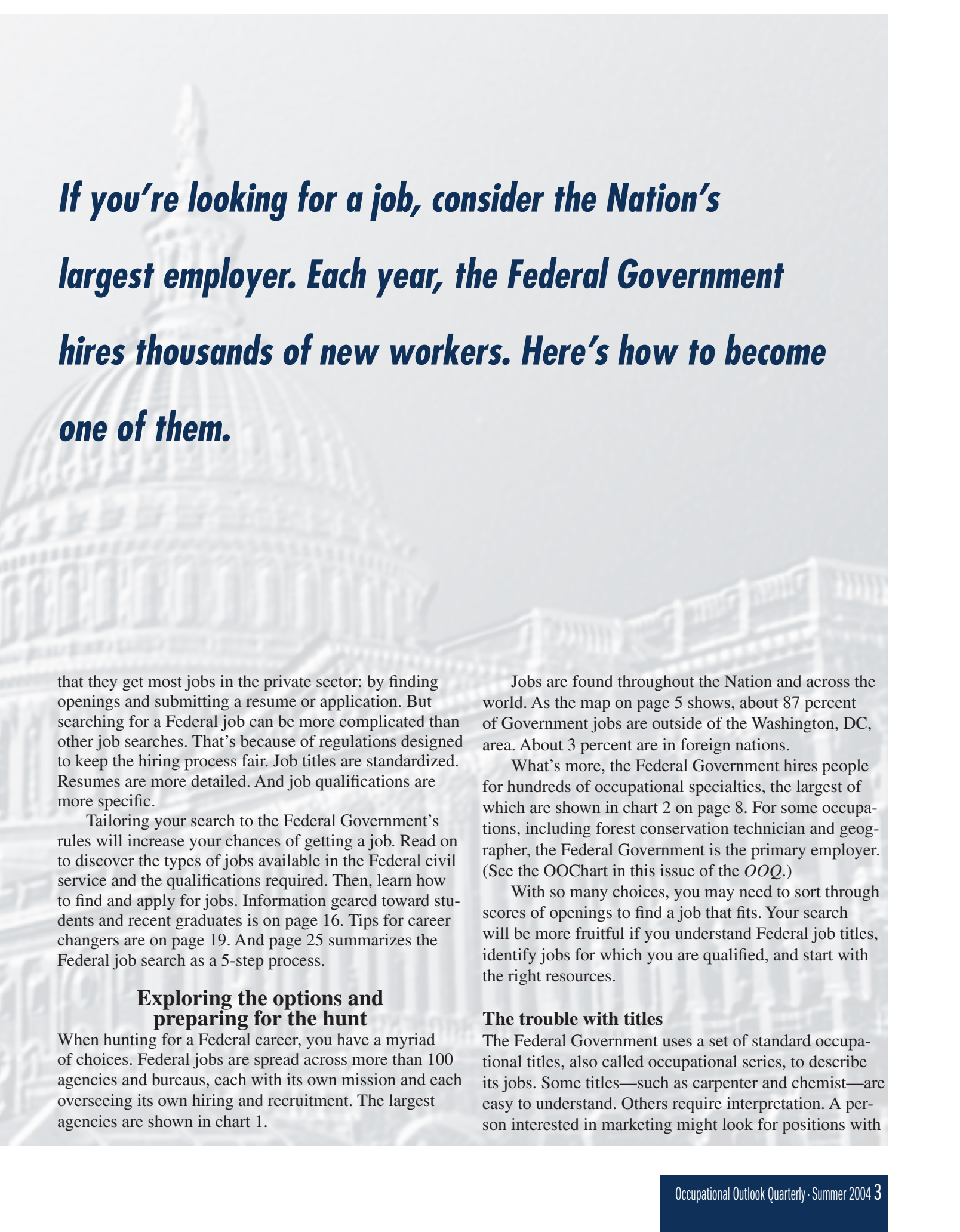
**D**esigning the International Space Station, uncovering security threats, conserving the Florida Everglades, creating an ad campaign to combat disease—these are examples of just a few of the tasks done by workers in the Federal Government.

With more than 1.7 million jobs and over 400 occupational specialties (excluding postal service and military workers), the Federal Government offers more choices than any other single employer in the United States. Whatever your interest and background, you can probably find a Government career to match.

People get jobs in the Federal Government in the same way

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***If you're looking for a job, consider the Nation's largest employer. Each year, the Federal Government hires thousands of new workers. Here's how to become one of them.***

that they get most jobs in the private sector: by finding openings and submitting a resume or application. But searching for a Federal job can be more complicated than other job searches. That's because of regulations designed to keep the hiring process fair. Job titles are standardized. Resumes are more detailed. And job qualifications are more specific.

Tailoring your search to the Federal Government's rules will increase your chances of getting a job. Read on to discover the types of jobs available in the Federal civil service and the qualifications required. Then, learn how to find and apply for jobs. Information geared toward students and recent graduates is on page 16. Tips for career changers are on page 19. And page 25 summarizes the Federal job search as a 5-step process.

### **Exploring the options and preparing for the hunt**

When hunting for a Federal career, you have a myriad of choices. Federal jobs are spread across more than 100 agencies and bureaus, each with its own mission and each overseeing its own hiring and recruitment. The largest agencies are shown in chart 1.

Jobs are found throughout the Nation and across the world. As the map on page 5 shows, about 87 percent of Government jobs are outside of the Washington, DC, area. About 3 percent are in foreign nations.

What's more, the Federal Government hires people for hundreds of occupational specialties, the largest of which are shown in chart 2 on page 8. For some occupations, including forest conservation technician and geographer, the Federal Government is the primary employer. (See the OOChart in this issue of the *OOQ*.)

With so many choices, you may need to sort through scores of openings to find a job that fits. Your search will be more fruitful if you understand Federal job titles, identify jobs for which you are qualified, and start with the right resources.

### **The trouble with titles**

The Federal Government uses a set of standard occupational titles, also called occupational series, to describe its jobs. Some titles—such as carpenter and chemist—are easy to understand. Others require interpretation. A person interested in marketing might look for positions with

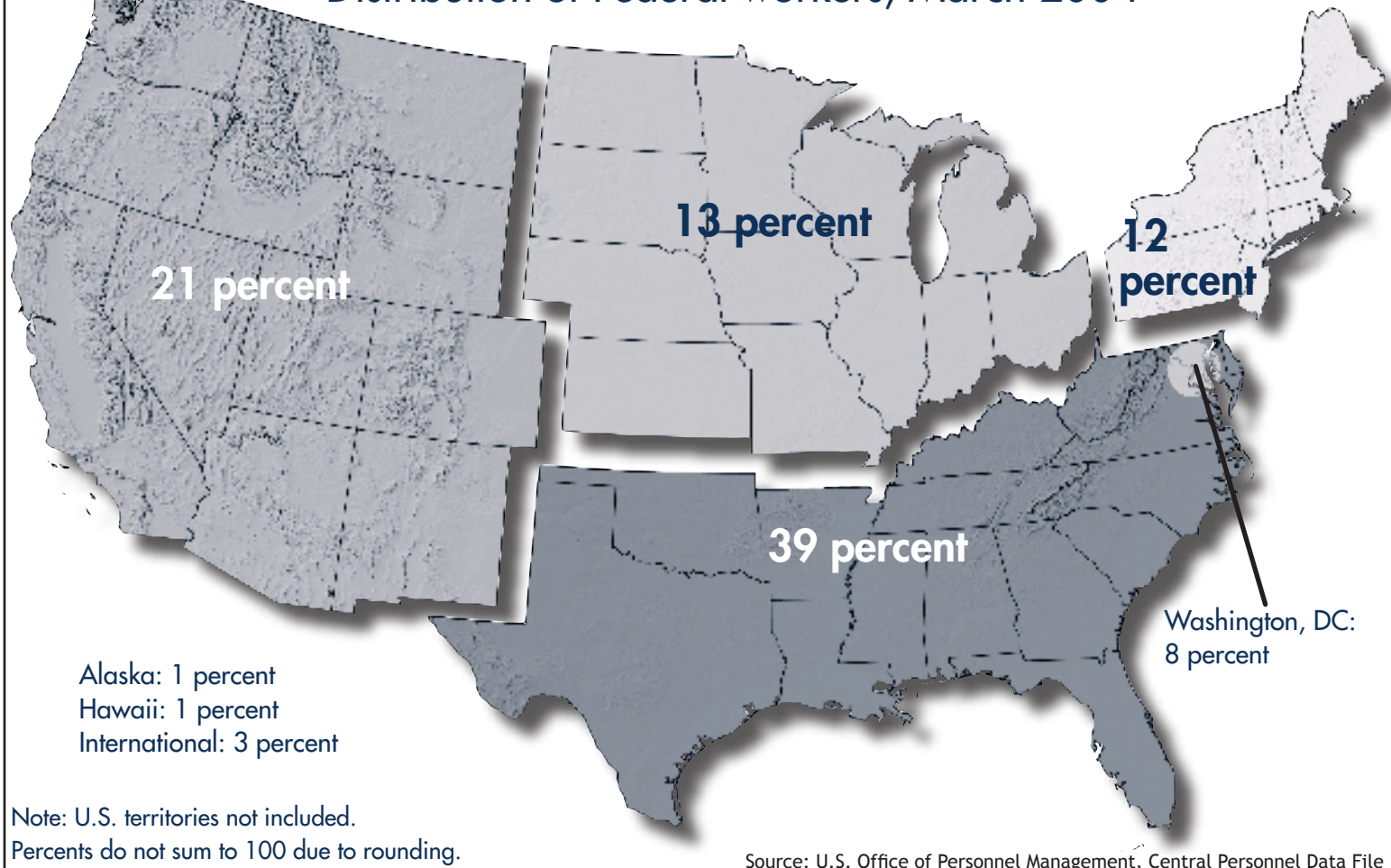
Chart 1

## Federal agencies with the most employment, March 2004



Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Central Personnel Data File

## Distribution of Federal workers, March 2004



the title market analyst, for example, but he or she also might want positions with the more unusual title of trade analyst. Both involve marketing products.

So, how can you find all the titles that fit your skills? If you are a college graduate, start by scanning the list on pages 11-13. It shows how different occupational titles relate to various college majors. If you have a degree in history, for example, titles such as archivist or historian could be a perfect match. But so might other titles, such as writer-editor or foreign affairs specialist, that are mentioned under different liberal arts majors.

Some of the job titles you'll find are unique to the Federal Government. Program analyst is the most common example. Workers with this title evaluate Government programs, make recommendations for change, and tell decisionmakers what resources programs need. If research, policy analysis, or business is your interest, try this title.

Jobseekers need to be flexible in their search because titles used by the Federal Government are often broader than private sector ones. One title that people often

overlook is technical writer. In the private sector, that title usually refers to jobs writing about science or computers. But in the U.S. Government, technical writing is any writing that requires specialized knowledge. The position could relate to law, education, or any other subject.

Jobseekers also need flexibility because titles in the Federal Government are often not as current as those in the private sector. Consider Web designer. The Government does not use that name, but it does hire people to do that type of work. Web designing jobs might be listed under visual arts specialist; public relations specialist; or, if the job requires technical computer skills, information technology manager. A good strategy for finding positions is to search for many different titles or by broad occupational group.

Recognizing the confusion that job titles can cause, the Federal Government provides some help. The Government's employment website, [www.usajobs.opm.gov](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov), provides definitions for many job titles. The site also offers quizzes that relate career interests to job titles. And for more detailed information about titles, check the U.S.

Office of Personnel Management's Occupational Classification Manual, available online at [www.opm.gov/fed-class/text/hdbktoct.htm](http://www.opm.gov/fed-class/text/hdbktoct.htm).

### Qualifications required

In nearly all cases, Federal employees must be U.S. citizens. Beyond that, qualifications vary.

**Qualifications.** The Government hires people with nearly every level of education and experience—from high school students with no experience to Ph.D.'s with established careers. Jobs in some occupations, such as engineer, ecologist, and lawyer, require that workers have a bachelor's or graduate degree and credit for specific college classes. Other occupations require experience, education, or a combination of both. A few, such as office clerk, require no education or experience to start.

The qualifications needed for each job are described in detail in the vacancy announcements that advertise job openings. Each job also has a code that corresponds to its minimum requirements. Understanding these codes will speed your search.

**Shortcut to matching your qualifications: Crack-**

**ing the GS code.** The coding systems used to classify jobs vary by agency, but the most common system is the General Schedule (GS). The GS assigns every job a grade level from 1 to 15, according to the minimum level of education and experience its workers need. Jobs that require no experience or education are graded a GS-1, for example. Jobs that require a bachelor's degree and no experience are graded a GS-5 or GS-7, depending on an applicant's academic credentials and an agency's policies.

The table below shows the GS levels for entry-level workers with different amounts of education and little or no work experience.

College degrees only qualify you for a particular grade level if they are related to the job. For occupations requiring general college-level skills, a bachelor's degree in any subject can qualify you. But other occupations require a specific major.

After gaining work experience, people often qualify for higher GS levels. In general, 1 year of experience related to the job could raise your grade by one GS level in most clerical and technician positions. In administrative, professional, and scientific positions, GS level increases

GS levels by education	
GS-1	No high school diploma
GS-2 (GS-3 for clerk-steno positions)	High school diploma
GS-3	1 year of full-time study after high school
GS-4	Associate degree or 2 years of full-time study after high school
GS-5 or GS-7, depending on agency policy and applicant's academic credentials	Bachelor's degree or 4 years of full-time study after high school
GS-7	Bachelor's degree plus 1 year of full-time graduate study
GS-9 (GS-11 for some research positions)	Master's degree or 2 years of full-time graduate study
GS-9	Law degree (J.D. or LL.B.)
GS-11 (GS-12 for some research positions)	Ph.D. or equivalent doctorate or advanced law degree (LL.M.)



USAJOBS lists nearly all Federal job openings available to the public.

in increments of two until you reach a GS-12. After that, GS level increases one level at a time.

With each additional year of experience at a higher level of responsibility, your GS level could continue to increase until it reaches the maximum for your occupation.

### Resources online and off

Applying for a Federal job is often simpler if you have access to the Internet. Although every part of the application process can also be completed offline, the Internet allows for faster searching, completion, and submission of applications.

Jobseekers can visit a Federal Employment Center for free access to the Federal employment websites. Many of the U.S. Department of Labor's One-Stop Ca-

reer Centers also provide Internet access for jobseekers. Contact information for Federal Employment Centers and One-Stop Career Centers is available in the blue pages of the telephone book or by calling the U.S. Department of Labor's toll-free career information line: 1(877) US2-JOBS (872-5627).

Without the Internet, you can conduct a search by telephone, fax machine, or mail.

### Finding openings

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management maintains a central database, called USAJOBS, that lists nearly every Federal job opening available to the public. Searching this database online or by telephone is the first step to finding a job. Jobseekers can also contact agencies directly for assistance and for information about special hiring programs. Finally, jobseekers shouldn't abandon traditional methods, such as reading classified ads and attending job fairs. Many agencies use ads and fairs to supplement their recruiting efforts.

### USAJOBS: The official source

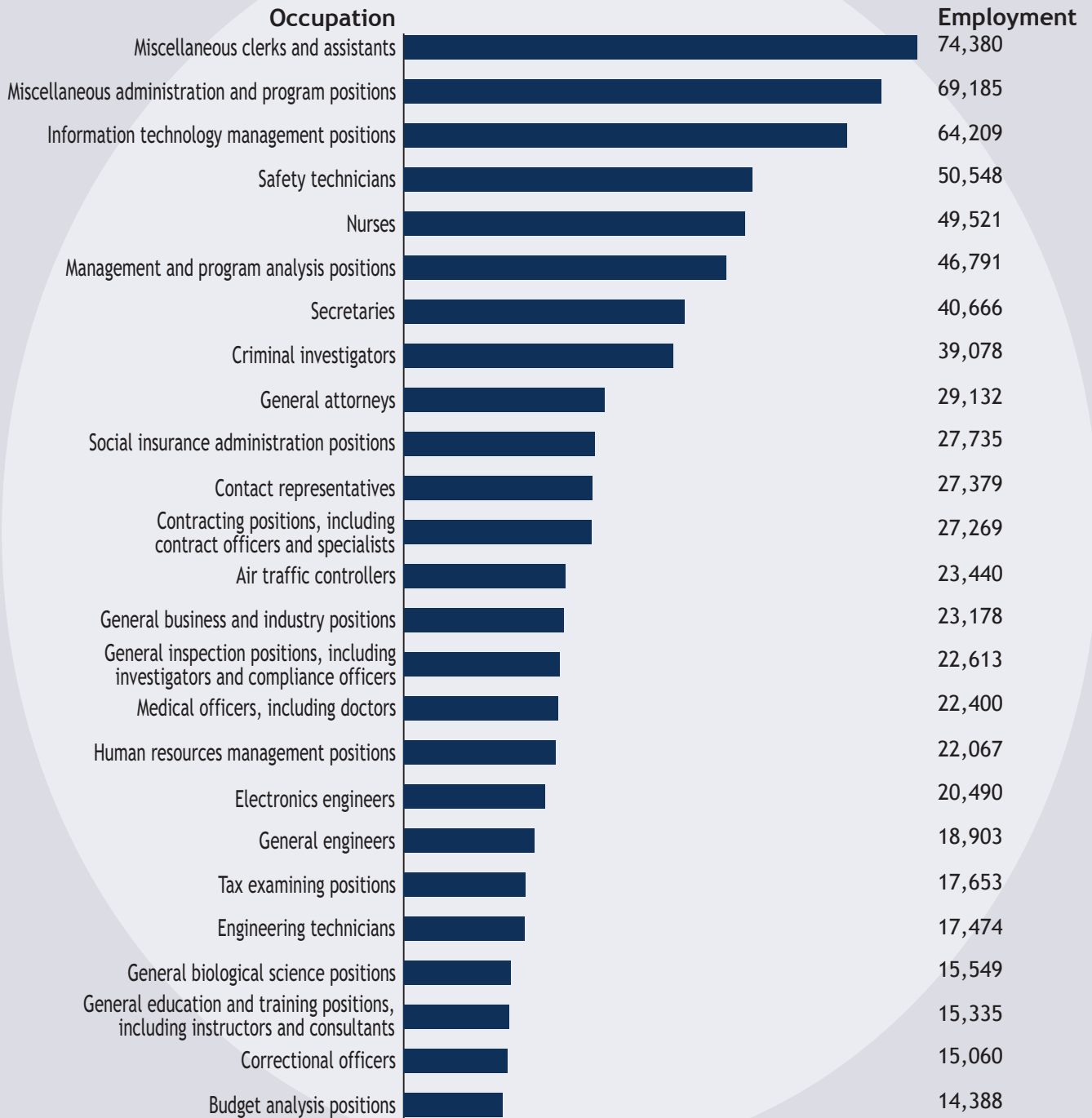
The first place to check for job openings in the Federal Government is the USAJOBS website or automated telephone line. If there's a Federal job that needs to be filled, it's likely to be listed here. In fact, in most cases, agencies are required to advertise job openings on the USAJOBS system.

**Website searches.** The USAJOBS website, [www.usajobs.opm.gov](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov), allows visitors to sort openings by occupation, location, occupational group, keyword, grade level, salary, and Government agency. The advanced option allows visitors to search by any or all of these factors simultaneously.

In a system that often holds more than 18,000 job

Chart 2

**Top 25 occupational series in the Federal Government, March 2004**



Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Central Personnel Data File

postings a day, pinpointing the best possibilities takes savvy sorting. This is especially true when job titles are unfamiliar. If you are looking for a specific job title, search for it immediately using the occupational series function. But remember: one Federal title does not necessarily cover all the jobs that use a particular skill or include a certain task. To cast a wider net, search by occupational group.

An alternative approach is to start searching by geographic location. Some locations might have only a handful of openings at a given time, and that could be a manageable bundle to sort.

To make sure you find other relevant jobs, supplement your hunt with a keyword search. These searches scan each vacancy announcement for given words and are ideal for jobseekers unfamiliar with Federal job titles. A search for “mathematics,” for example, could yield openings for accountants, physical scientists, and other positions related to math.

To identify jobs that require a given level of education or experience, specify the appropriate GS level, as described in the last section. Jobs listed under other classification systems will be included automatically.

If you decide to search by agency, remember that opportunities might be available in unexpected places. Environmental engineers, for example, are hired not only by the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Park Service, but also by the Army Corps of Engineers, the Navy, the Department of Energy, and more than 30 other agencies.

You can program the USAJOBS site to repeat your searches automatically and e-mail the results every day or

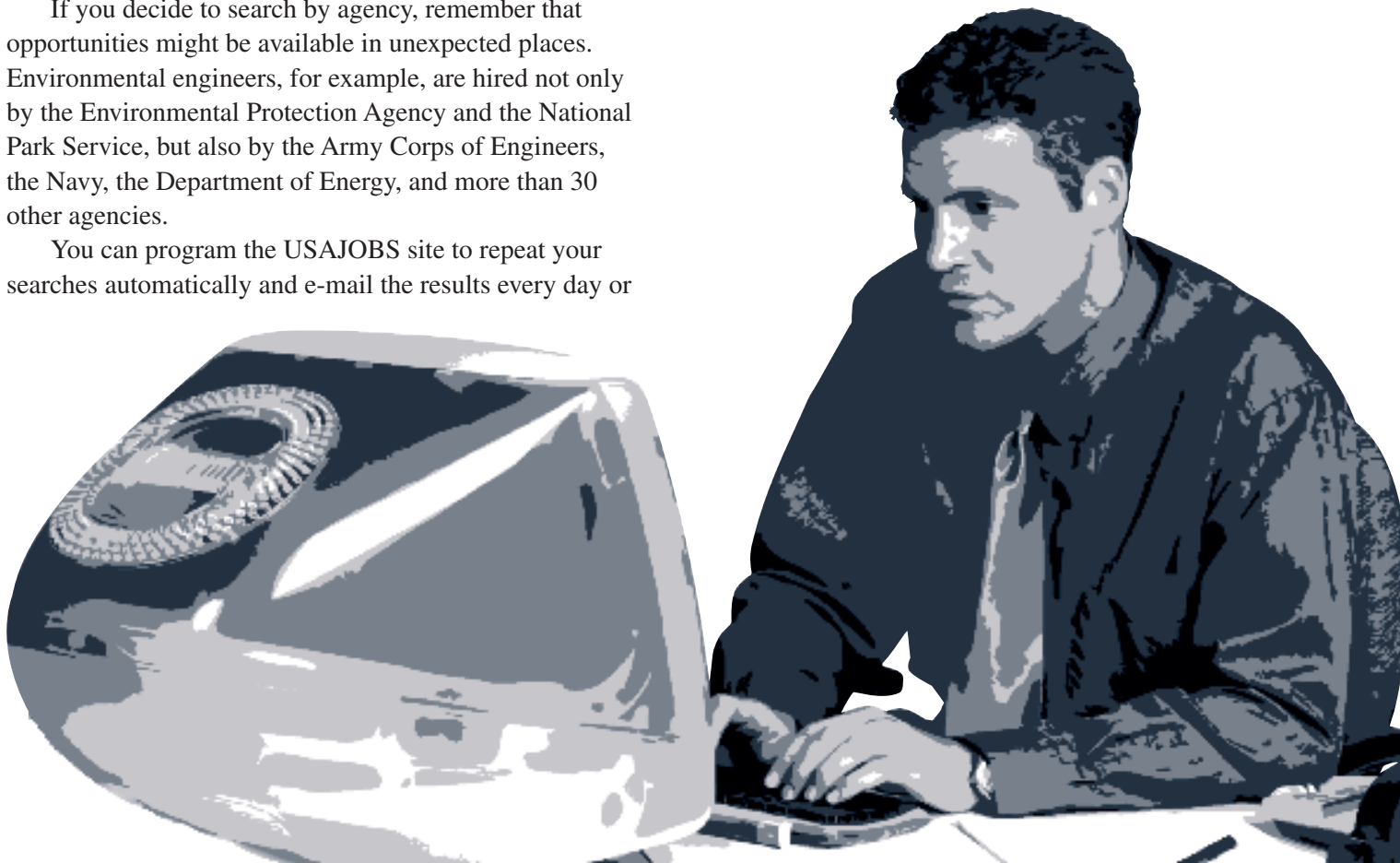
every week.

**Automated telephone system.** The USAJOBS automated telephone system, available by calling (703) 724-1850, is the offline alternative to the website. It lists the same openings and is available 24 hours a day. Customer service representatives are available weekdays from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. eastern standard time.

Although the system changes periodically, it gives callers search options that are similar—but not identical—to the ones on the website. Knowing the occupational titles and series codes that interest you can speed a telephone search because callers can key these into the telephone menus to start a job search.

Callers can also search by occupation type (professional, senior executive service, clerical and technician, and trades and labor), length of job (temporary, full time, part time, or summer), or hiring agency. Callers can refine their results by specifying location or pay range.

The telephone system gives a few details about each job opening, including job title and location, and then offers to mail the full announcement.





### **Contacting agency offices: The direct approach**

In addition to using the USAJOBS database, applicants can contact Federal Government agencies directly. This method is especially important when searching for jobs that are not required to be posted on USAJOBS. (See the box about exceptions to learn more about positions that are exempt from this requirement.)

But contacting agencies should not replace searching USAJOBS. Some agencies update their own websites less frequently than they do their USAJOBS submissions. Also, the human resources specialist you speak with might not be aware of every opportunity. And you might not know about all the agencies with openings.

Even so, there are still many benefits to calling agencies directly. Human resources specialists can often direct jobseekers to appropriate openings quickly, helping them to match their skills to jobs. They can also explain special hiring programs, including the Outstanding Scholar Program for people who are college graduates, who have grade point averages of at least 3.45 or who have academic honors, and who are applying to designated occupations; the Bilingual or Bicultural Program for people who speak Spanish or have cultural knowledge important to the job; and the direct-hire authorities for occupations identified as having a shortage of qualified workers. Workers in information technology occupations and some

medical occupations currently qualify for direct hiring programs in many agencies.

Jobseekers who are minorities or veterans or who have disabilities also can ask to speak to a specialist who focuses on helping workers in these populations. Most agencies have such specialists.

Check online or in the telephone book for agencies' contact information. You can also find a list of agencies online at [www.firstgov.gov/agencies/federal/all\\_agencies/index.shtml](http://www.firstgov.gov/agencies/federal/all_agencies/index.shtml).

### **Other sources of openings: Newspapers, job fairs, and more**

Federal employers often supplement USAJOBS postings with advertisements in newspapers and journals and on private job boards. Many Government agencies also provide school career centers with information about jobs, internships, co-ops, and special programs for students and recent graduates.

Many agencies also rely on job fairs to recruit new workers. In fact, if you arrive at a fair with a resume, there's a chance you could leave with a job offer. Under direct-hire regulations, some agencies can hire applicants on the spot for a few designated occupations. In the more likely case, recruiters will accept your resume and start the traditional hiring process.

*(continued on page 14)*

## **Exceptions to the Federal rules**

A few agencies and occupations are exempt from some standard regulations that govern Federal hiring in the civil service. Jobs in those agencies and occupations do not have to be listed on USAJOBS. And people who apply for those jobs might have to fill out different application forms or follow different procedures than the ones described in this article.

Excepted-service agencies include those in the legislative and judicial branches of Government and several agencies in the executive branch, including the U.S. Postal Service, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the intelligence services.

A few occupations, such as attorneys and

Foreign Service workers, also are exempt from some of the procedures described here, and so are positions that last fewer than 180 days.

Even when they don't have to, many excepted-service agencies still follow the standard procedures. These agencies often list openings on USAJOBS, for example, and require the same information in applications and resumes. Contact excepted-service agencies to be sure of their hiring methods.

Finally, a small percentage of positions in the Federal Government are set aside for political appointees. People are appointed to these jobs by elected officials.

# Federal job titles by college major

Below is a sampling of titles that relate to various college majors. Many of these positions allow for the substitution of experience for a degree. Most of these titles require either a bachelor's degree or 5 years of closely related experience. A degree in the subject listed does not necessarily meet basic requirements of the position. Some require specific coursework in other subjects, and some, such as project manager, require experience.

Titles marked (\*) can be entered with no education or experience, but coursework leading to an associate, vocational, or bachelor's degree can qualify workers for a higher level of responsibility and pay.

Finally, there are many other titles related to these subjects, and official titles change with changing regulations. Use this list as a guide, but search for positions by keyword and occupational group, as well.

## **Agriculture and agronomy**

Agricultural commodity grader  
Agricultural engineer  
Agricultural management specialist  
Agricultural program specialist  
Agronomist  
Foreign agriculture affairs specialist  
Irrigation operation occupation\*  
Social conservation technician\*  
Soil conservationist  
Soil scientist

Fishery biologist  
Food inspector  
General fish and wildlife administrator  
Government Accountability Office (GAO) analyst  
Microbiologist  
Range conservationist  
Range technician\*  
Veterinarian or veterinary health scientist  
Wildlife biologist  
Zoologist

Government Accountability Office (GAO) evaluator  
Intelligence specialist  
Internal revenue agent or officer  
Securities compliance examiner  
Tax specialist  
Trade specialist

## **Architecture and construction science**

Architect  
Construction analyst  
Construction control inspector  
Landscape architect  
Naval architect

## **Botany**

Agronomist  
Botanist  
Forestry technician\*  
Geneticist  
Horticulturist  
Plant pathologist  
Plant physiologist  
Plant protection and quarantine specialist  
Plant protection technician\*

## **Facilities management and realty**

Distribution facility and storage manager  
Equipment specialist  
Facility manager  
Housing manager  
Industrial property manager  
Realtor

## **Art**

Arts specialist  
Audio-visual production specialist  
Design patents examiner  
Exhibits specialist or technician  
General arts and information specialist  
Illustrator  
Museum specialist or technician  
Photographer  
Recreation and creative arts therapist  
Visual information specialist

## **Business**

Business and industry specialist  
Contract specialist or procurement analyst  
Government Accountability Office (GAO) analyst  
Miscellaneous administrative and programs specialist, including acquisition manager  
Program analyst

## **Human resources and employee relations**

Apprenticeship and training representative  
Contractor industrial relations specialist  
Employee development specialist  
Employee relations specialist  
Equal employment opportunity specialist  
Hearing and appeals specialist  
Labor management relations specialist or examiner  
Mediator  
Wage and hour compliance specialist

## **Astronomy**

Astronomer and space scientist  
Geodesist  
Physical scientist

## **Accounting and finance**

Accountant  
Accounting technician\*  
Assessor  
Auditor  
Budget analyst  
Financial administrator  
Financial analyst  
Financial institution examiner  
Financial manager

## **Industrial management**

Industrial hygienist  
Production control specialist  
Quality assurance specialist

## **Biology**

Animal health technician\*  
Animal scientist  
Biological science technician\*  
Biological scientist, general  
Consumer safety specialist  
Fish and wildlife refuge management

## **Management**

Administrative officer  
Commissary store manager  
Logistics management specialist  
Management analyst  
Printing manager

Program manager  
Project manager  
Supply specialist  
Support services administrator

### **Management information systems**

Financial manager  
Information technology specialist or manager  
Operations research analyst

### **Marketing**

Agricultural marketing specialist  
Bond sales promotion representative  
Property disposal specialist  
Trade specialist

### **Chemistry**

Chemical engineer  
Chemist  
Consumer safety officer  
Environmental engineer  
Food inspector  
Food technologist  
Health physicist  
Hospital housekeeping management  
Intelligence specialist  
Physical scientist  
Toxicologist

### **Communications and journalism**

Agricultural market reporter  
Broadcaster  
Communications specialist  
Language specialist  
Printing manager  
Public affairs specialist  
Technical writer/editor  
Telecommunications managers  
Writer/editor

### **Computer science**

Computer specialist  
Information technology project manager  
Information technology (covers many specialties)

### **Counseling and social work**

Educational and vocational training specialist  
Educational services specialist  
Equal opportunity compliance specialist  
Food assistance program specialists and other social program specialists  
Human resources specialist  
Psychologist

Social service aids and assistant\*  
Social insurance administrator  
Social worker  
Vocational rehabilitation specialist

### **Criminal justice**

Border patrol agent  
Correctional officer  
Criminal investigator  
Document analyst  
Internal revenue officer  
Police officer  
U.S. marshal

### **Education and library science**

#### **Education**

Education and training specialist or technician  
Educational program specialist  
Employee development specialist  
Instructional systems specialist  
Public health educator  
Teacher (U.S. Department of Defense)  
Training instructor  
Vocational rehabilitation specialist

#### **Library science**

Archivist  
Librarian  
Supply cataloger

#### **Physical education**

Outdoor recreation planner  
Recreation specialist  
Sports specialist

### **Electronics**

Electronics technician\*  
Telecommunications manager

### **English and literature**

Communications analyst  
Miscellaneous administrators and programs specialist  
Printing manager  
Public affairs specialist  
Technical writer/editor  
Writer/editor

### **Engineering**

Engineering specialties  
Operations research analyst  
Physical scientist  
Quality assurance occupations

### **Environmental studies**

Ecologist  
Environmental engineer

Environmental protection assistant\*  
Environmental protection specialist  
Fish and wildlife refuge management  
General fish and wildlife administrator  
Government Accountability Office (GAO) analyst  
Programs specialist (Environmental and natural resources)  
Rangeland manager

### **Foreign language**

Border patrol agent  
Customs inspector  
Foreign affairs specialist  
Intelligence specialist  
Language specialist

### **Forestry**

Forest products technology specialist  
Forestry specialist  
Forestry technician\*  
Soil conservationist

### **Geology**

Geodesist  
Geologist  
Hydrologist  
Oceanographer  
Physical scientist

### **Health and medicine**

Consumer safety specialist  
Consumer safety inspector\*  
Public health programs specialist

#### **Health science**

Industrial hygienist  
Public health educator  
Safety and occupational health manager  
Social insurance administrator

#### **Hospital administration**

Administrative officer  
Health system administrator  
Health system specialist  
Hospital housekeeping manager

#### **Medical**

Dental hygienist\*  
Dental hygienist, community health  
Diagnostic radiological technician\*  
Medical officer ("physician" or specialty name often used)  
Medical technician\*  
Nurse

Pharmacist  
Physical therapist  
Physician assistant

### **Nutrition**

Consumer safety officer  
Dietitians and nutritionist  
Food assistance program specialists  
Food technology occupations

### **History**

Archivist  
Historian  
Government Accountability Office (GAO) analyst  
Intelligence specialist  
Museum curator  
Museum specialist  
Miscellaneous administrator and programs specialist

### **Law**

Administrative law judge  
Attorney  
Hearing and appeals specialist  
Highway safety specialist  
Import specialist  
Paralegal  
Tax law specialist

### **Mathematics**

Actuary  
Cartographer  
Mathematician  
Operations research analyst  
Statistician  
Traffic manager

### **Park and recreation management**

Forester  
Outdoor recreation planner  
Park ranger  
Recreation and creative arts therapist  
Recreation specialist

### **Physics**

Astronomer and space scientist  
Geodesist  
Geophysicist  
Health physicist  
Hydrologist  
Patent examiner  
Photographic technology specialist

Physical scientist  
Physicist

### **Social science**

Program specialist  
Social scientist

### **Archaeology and anthropology**

Anthropologist  
Archaeologist  
Museum curator  
Museum specialist

### **Economics**

Economist  
Financial analyst  
Industrial analyst  
Manpower development specialist  
Trade specialist

### **Geography**

Cartographer  
Cartographic technician\*  
Community planner  
Geodetic technician  
Geographer  
Intelligence specialist  
Navigational information specialist  
Surveying technician\*  
Other titles plus Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

### **International relations**

Foreign affairs specialist  
Intelligence specialist  
International relations specialist  
International trade specialist  
Language specialist

### **Political science, government, or public administration**

Foreign affairs specialist  
Government Accountability Office (GAO) analyst  
Miscellaneous administrators and programs specialist  
Program analyst  
Program manager  
Public affairs specialist  
Public utilities manager

### **Psychology**

Educational services specialist  
Employee development specialist  
Human resources specialist  
Psychologist  
Recreational and creative arts therapist

### **Sociology**

Social service aids and assistant\*  
Social service administration specialist  
Sociologist

### **Common titles across all majors**

Intelligence specialist  
Program analyst  
Program manager  
Program specialist  
Writer/editor



(continued from page 10)

## **Decoding vacancy announcements**

Every Federal job opening that is available to the public has a vacancy announcement. The announcement describes the position and how to apply for it. It is filled with important clues about what agencies want in an applicant.

### **Announcements, piece by piece**

All vacancy announcements have the same basic parts, although the order, style, and wording vary. Knowing these parts can help you to zero in on key facts.

**Basic information.** At the top of an announcement, you will find the announcement number, position title, agency name, and duty location. The name of a person to contact for more information might be listed here or at the end of the announcement.

**Who may apply.** Some jobs are reserved for people who are current or former Federal employees or who are veterans or disabled people who meet specific conditions. These vacancy announcements say that they are for “Employees only” or “Status candidates only.”

For jobs open to the public, announcements say something like, “Open to all qualified candidates” or “Open to all U.S. citizens.”

On some announcements, this section might be called “Area of consideration.”

**Opening date.** Agencies begin accepting applications on this day.

**Closing date.** Applications are due on this day. Sometimes, applications only need to be postmarked by the due date. But usually, they must arrive at the agency by this day, either by midnight or by the close of business.

If you cannot meet the deadline, don’t give up immediately. First, check to see if it has been extended. In some agencies, this happens at least 10 percent of the time. Also, in rare cases, it may be possible to submit a partial application and complete it later. To find out, call the contact person listed on the announcement.

A closing date that is months away or that is listed as “continuous” means the agency is gathering a pool of candidates for future job openings.

**Pay range.** Most, but not all, Federal workers start their jobs at the low end of the earnings range listed on the announcement and work their way up. Applicants can sometimes negotiate higher starting pay based on their

qualifications and salary history.

**Series and grade.** Every Federal Government job has a code that consists of a two-letter combination followed by two numbers. The letters refer to the system used to classify the occupation. As discussed previously, GS is the most common letter combination and refers to General Schedule. WG refers to Wage Grade, the classification system used for positions that are paid by the hour. Other letter combinations stand for classification systems specific to a particular agency.

After the letter combination, the first number is a 4-digit occupational series. This usually corresponds to the job’s title. The second number is a 1- or 2-digit grade level that corresponds to the job’s minimum requirements, level of responsibility, and pay range.

In many announcements, more than one grade level is listed. This means that people who qualify for either grade can apply. It also means that workers can be promoted to the highest level listed without changing jobs.

**Promotion potential.** This is the highest grade level available for the job. If no potential is listed, that does not mean that the job is a dead end. Nearly all Federal jobs offer regular pay increases, and many positions prepare workers for higher level jobs.

**Job duties.** This section of the announcement lists the specific tasks of the job. Analyze them for clues about the types of skills the employer is looking for. Later, you can tailor your application to match.

**Basic qualifications.** These are the minimum levels of education and experience required for the job. If the job has many possible grade levels, the qualifications for each are described.

**Additional qualifications.** Sometimes, this section is titled “knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) required”; “desired qualifications”; “ranking factors”; “selective factors”; or “evaluation methods.” Whatever its name, the section describes further qualifications for the job. These are the criteria used to rank applicants. Your application should address them all.

**How to apply.** This section lists the materials that applicants must provide. It describes how and when the materials should be submitted.

**Conditions for employment.** If a position requires travel, background checks, drug screening, or a security clearance, those conditions are explained in the announcement.

**Standard legal information.** Most announcements include sections on veterans' preference, or preferential hiring for qualified veterans; the Career Transition Program (CTP), or preferential hiring for qualified Federal employees whose jobs have been eliminated; and merit promotion procedures, or application instructions for current Federal employees. Skip these sections if they do not apply to you.

Announcements also include equal opportunity statements, information for applicants with disabilities who need assistance, and, sometimes, admonitions to tell the truth on the application. This information varies little between announcements.

### Applying for a job

The application that you submit will go through many levels of review. First, human resources specialists will screen it to see if you meet the basic requirements for the position. Then, the specialists or a panel of experts will rate your application according to the additional qualifications listed on the vacancy announcement. If your application rates among the best, it will be forwarded to the hiring manager, who will choose the winning candidate.

Every agency follows its own procedures when requesting applications. Some agencies ask only for a resume tailored to the Government's requirements. Others also ask for written statements about your skills or for completed questionnaires. You might need to submit copies of academic transcripts or other materials, too.

### Resumes with a Federal twist

A resume for a Federal job includes all of the information in a standard resume, plus some additional details. These resumes are often two to four pages, which is longer than the 1- to 2-page resumes typical in the private sector.

Creating a resume involves gathering the required information and putting it in the right format.

**Gathering the facts.** If you have a standard resume, you already have most of the information you need. But Federal agencies ask for more information than most other employers do. Resumes and applications for Federal employment must include the following:

- **Contact information.** As you would on any resume, you must list your full name, address, and telephone number. But you also need to provide your Social Security number and country of citizenship.

If you are applying for a job that is located far from your current address, indicate a willingness to relocate. Otherwise, some agencies might eliminate your application.

- **Job facts.** Copy the announcement number, position title, and grade level from the vacancy announcement. If the announcement lists more than one grade level, state the lowest level you would accept. For example, if the announcement describes the job as "GS-5/7," decide whether you would take the GS-5 or if you would only accept a GS-7.

Be sure you qualify for the level you choose, however. If you pick a level that is too high, you will not pass the first screening. If the level you pick is too low, the agency will most likely upgrade you automatically.

- **Work experience.** For each past job, give the standard information found in most resumes. Specifically, state the job title, starting and ending dates (including month and year), employer's name and address (or write "self employed," if that applies), and major duties and accomplishments.

In addition to that information, a resume for a Federal job also must show the average number of hours worked per week or simply state "full time"; salary or wage earned; supervisor's name, address, and telephone number; and whether your most recent supervisor may be contacted. If you have had past jobs in the Federal Government, include the occupational series numbers and the starting and ending grades of those positions.

If you have relevant volunteer experience, mention it. In Uncle Sam's eyes, all experience counts. Consider using titles that show what you did rather than using the generic title of "Volunteer."

Most importantly, describe job duties and accomplishments in a way that proves how you are qualified. Study the vacancy announcement and emphasize the parts of your work history that match the qualifications listed there.

Remember, human resources specialists in the Federal Government might not be familiar with your career field. To help them understand how your experience matches what is required, try using some of the same words found in the vacancy announcement, especially words that describe job duties or qualifications. You also can help them understand your work by spelling out acronyms and other abbreviations.

## Jobs for students and recent graduates

Are you looking for an internship, a summer job, or a co-op program? Or are you looking for a quick way to jump-start your career after graduation? If so, the Federal Government can provide those opportunities.

**Summer jobs and student jobs.** Most agencies offer student jobs and internships as part of the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP). Some student jobs, such as science and engineering co-ops at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and internships at the National Institutes of Health, relate to students' career goals. Students often get school credit, as well as pay. Other jobs provide experience that is more general. To qualify for a student job, you need to attend a high school, college, or vocational school, with at least a half-time schedule.

Students can find internships, co-ops, and other jobs by checking the online database at [www.studentjobs.gov](http://www.studentjobs.gov). This site is run by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management and the U.S. Department of Education. It lists many opportunities. Agencies are not required to post opportunities on the site, however.

You can also check with the career guidance office at your school or call agencies directly. If you are looking for a summer job, start your search in the fall; some agencies begin adver-

tising positions in October, and jobs often fill quickly.

**Recent graduates.** The Federal Government also offers special programs for recent college graduates to help them advance their careers. Participants usually receive special training and assignments and yearly promotions. Most of these programs are specific to particular agencies. You can learn about them by attending career fairs, contacting agencies that interest you, and searching the USAJOBS database.

One career-building program—the Presidential Management Fellows Program—is available in several agencies. In this program, management fellows receive formal and informal on-the-job training and receive assignments designed to further their career goals. The fellowship lasts 2 years and is open to people with graduate degrees in any subject. Fellows usually start at the GS-9 level of pay. They are eligible for the GS-12 level at the end of the program. Fellows who already have relevant experience can start at higher pay levels.

Fellows must be nominated for the program by their college or university. Check with your career guidance office for application instructions. For more information, visit [www.pmi.opm.gov](http://www.pmi.opm.gov) or call (202) 606-1800.

For past jobs with complicated or changing duties, consider dividing your job duties into sections. The description of a management job, for example, might be divided into staff training, budgeting, and project planning sections.

Make your resume stand out by including your most impressive accomplishments. You might say that you earned an “A” on a research paper, won an award, or saved your company time by finishing a project ahead of schedule. Consider using numbers to add concreteness. If, for example, you organized a successful fundraiser, say how much money you collected.

- **Education and training.** For this part of the resume, provide the name and address of the last high school you attended. If you earned a diploma or GED,

give the month and year it was conferred. Except in the case of some agencies' automated forms, nearly all applications for Federal jobs must provide information about high school.

Also, give the names and addresses of any colleges or universities you have attended. List degrees received, the month and year they were conferred, and your major areas of study. Consider providing the number of credits you have earned in subjects related to the position. In the Federal Government, 24 credits in a subject is often considered equivalent to a major.

If you are working toward a degree, show the total number of credits you have earned. If you are still in school, include the month and year you expect to graduate and the word “expected.”

Next, list specific courses you have taken that relate to the job. Be sure to list any courses that are mentioned in the job announcement, together with the number of credits those courses were worth.

Finally, describe job training and certifications and when and where you received them. You might also mention academic awards, honor societies, and major school projects, especially if you are a student or recent graduate.

Be ready to provide your grade point average; some agencies ask for it on their automated forms. If you are given a choice, managers offer this standard advice: list a grade point average if you think that it will help. College graduates with averages of at least 2.5 or 3.0 sometimes qualify for higher starting pay and expedited hiring programs. Applicants also can qualify for some programs based on class rank, membership in honor societies, or grade point average during the last half of an academic program.

- **Other qualifications.** Be sure to mention relevant skills and achievements that are not immediately obvious from other parts of your resume. These might include computer skills, knowledge of a foreign language, or professional designations.

- **Performance awards.** Consider listing—either within your work history or in a separate section—any performance awards or bonuses you have received.

- **Qualification summary.** You might want to summarize your qualifications in a separate section of your resume. Summaries can be especially useful in explaining long or varied work histories. These sections work best when they focus on the qualifications shown in the vacancy announcement.

- **Hiring preferences.** If you are a veteran or a former Federal employee who was laid off, you might qualify for hiring preferences. Read the vacancy announcement or contact the U.S. Office of Personnel Management to learn more. If you qualify, mention your eligibility on your resume.

**Making the best of the Federal format.** The next step is to submit your information in the proper format, as specified by the vacancy announcement. Many Federal agencies have developed their own automated resume builders that applicants must use. Other agencies will accept any type of resume as long as it includes the required information. If you are applying to one of these more flexible agencies, you can submit a paper resume or one of the official forms that the Government provides.

- **Agency-specific resume builders.** The easiest way to complete an online resume builder is to cut and paste the information from a word-processing program to the form. You can check the word-processed document for spelling and save it for future use.

Agencies with their own resume builders often use automated systems to check applicants' qualifications. Computers sort resumes by looking for the keywords requested by the hiring manager. These keywords can include verbs—such as “wrote” or “analyzed”—that describe job duties, the names of required courses or college majors, the names of software packages that applicants should know, or any other words related to a job's requirements. The more keywords the computer finds on a resume, the higher the applicant's score.

For applications screened by computer, it helps to use important words from the vacancy announcement exactly as they appear. If you are choosing between two words that describe your skills, choose the one listed on the announcement. But don't overdo it by forcing a keyword that doesn't fit your skills or by making your resume too complicated. Remember that if your application passes to the next stage, it will be read and rated by a hiring manager, not a computer.

Most automated systems let jobseekers check to see how an application will look when hiring managers see it. Use this option to be sure that formatting is correct and that the application length fits into the limits set by the system. Then, submit a resume to apply for each job that interests you in the agency. This is necessary because employers will only be able to see your resume if you respond to their particular announcement.

Nearly every agency will accept a paper resume as a substitute for the automated forms, if it is formatted for computer scanning and conforms to other norms. Detailed instructions about creating a scannable resume are provided by the agencies upon request.

- **Paper resumes.** If an agency does not have its own form, you have many options. One is to submit a paper resume. If you already have a paper resume, you can quickly adapt it to the Federal Government's requirements by attaching supplemental sheets with the extra information needed—adding a list of past salaries and supervisors, for example. Or you can integrate required information into the body of the resume.

Each page should include the job announcement number and your name and Social Security number. This helps reviewers keep your paperwork together.



Take advantage of a paper resume's flexibility by choosing a format that highlights your strengths. If you are a recent graduate, for example, you might place education before work experience. The only limitation when applying for a Federal job is that you must use a chronological format. List each job in reverse chronological order, starting with your most recent job.

- **OF-612 form.** Another possibility is to fill out the Government's optional application form: the OF-612. By using this paper form, you lose flexibility but avoid having to create a resume from scratch. The form has spaces for all required information. Request a form by calling USAJOBS or visiting a U.S. Government personnel office, or download a copy by going online to [www.usajobs.opm.gov/forms](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/forms).

- **USAJOBS resume builder.** Still another option for applying is to use the online resume builder on the

USAJOBS website. This builder allows you to submit your application quickly and to update your resume quickly.

Fill out the online form, or cut and paste the information from a word-processed document. Then, submit the resume electronically for each vacancy that interests you. Soon, you will be able to transfer your information automatically from the USAJOBS resume builder to agency-specific builders.

For more advice about resume writing, see "Resumes, applications, and cover letters" in the summer 1999 issue of the *OOQ* and online at [www.bls.gov/opub/ooq/1999/summer/art01.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/opub/ooq/1999/summer/art01.pdf).

### Written statements about your skills: KSAs

In addition to a resume, you might also be asked to write statements—often called KSAs or knowledge, skills, and abilities statements—that show how you meet specific job requirements. For example, an announcement for a management analyst might ask you to describe your communication skills. An announcement for an accounting technician might ask about mathematics ability or knowledge of accounting procedures.

Writing these statements offers an important advantage: the chance to prove you have all of the qualifications an employer wants. Selecting officials agree that you should always include these statements if an announcement requests them.

Statements are typically one-half page to one page in length, single-spaced, although length can vary. They are usually written in paragraph

*OF-612 is the Federal Government's optional application form.*

**OPTIONAL APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT - F 612**

**Section A - Applicant Information**

\* Use Standard State Postal Code type or print "00" in the State field.

1. Job title in announcement

2. Grade(s) applied for

3. Announcement number

4a. Last name

4b. First and middle name

4c. State

4d. Zip Code

5. Social Security Number

6a. Mailing address \*

6b. City

6c. Country (if not within the United States of America)

6d. Address (if available)

7. Phone numbers (include area code if within the United States)

7a. Daytime

7b. Evening

8. Describe your paid and nonpaid work experience related to the position (include series and grade)

9. To (mm/yyyy)

10. Address

Form Approved OMB No. 3208-0219

## Tips for career changers

If you are an experienced worker looking for a Federal job, you are in good company. More than 40 percent of the people hired by the Federal Government last year were experienced workers over the age of 35. These tips will help you to get credit for your expertise.

- **Estimate your GS level.** As mentioned in this article, the Federal Government classifies positions according to the complexity of their job duties and their level of responsibility. People qualify for a given level based on education, experience, or a combination of both. The most common classification system is the General Schedule (GS). To find your GS level, use the table on page 6 to estimate the level you qualify for based on education alone. If you also have relevant experience, your GS level will be higher than that. If you have had relevant managerial responsibilities or do complex work independently, you might qualify for a GS-12 or above. To be certain, read the job descriptions in vacancy announcements.

- **Understand job requirements.** Vacancy announcements often say that a worker needs experience equivalent to a particular GS level. A vacancy announcement at the GS-12 level, for example, might say that you need 1 year of experience at the GS-11 level. Some announcements give examples of what that experience could be. Others don't. The simplest way to know if you qualify for a job is to read the job duties. If the work described there is only slightly more complex or responsible than work you have done in the past, you might be eligible for the position.

If some of the required experience for a job seems unique to the Federal Government, explore further by calling the agency or the contact

person for the position. You might learn that your private-sector experience meets the requirement.

- **Be flexible about titles.** If you want to be a manager or supervisor, do not limit yourself to openings with those words in the job title. Jobs with widely varying levels of responsibility are often listed under the same title.

- **Be specific about past experience.** Human resources managers will study the details of your application to decide if you qualify for a job. They will compare your past work to the kinds of tasks performed at different GS levels. Managers will pay close attention to the amount of time you spent in each job. They usually will estimate exactly how many months or years you have done each major job task.

When creating a resume or writing statements about your skills, show your level of expertise by explaining who you reported to or worked with and how your work was used.

- **Explain past job titles.** Use job titles that clearly describe what you did. You may want to put the equivalent Federal title in parentheses next to your actual job titles.

- **Consider Senior Executive Service.** Finally, if you have substantial experience in high-level leadership positions, you might qualify for the Senior Executive Service (SES). SES positions require you to answer a set of standard questions about your leadership ability. A review board established by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management will certify your qualifications based on your answers and your experience. For more information, see [www.opm.gov/ses](http://www.opm.gov/ses) or call (202) 606-1800.

form. But if time is short and the job you want doesn't involve writing, some screeners say that it's fine to use bulleted lists instead.

Before you start to write, read the vacancy announcement carefully for instructions about length, format, and content.

What is most important when writing about skills? Screeners advise using specific examples, highlighting your best accomplishments, and getting to the point

quickly. For help in writing about skills you do not have, see the box on page 21.

Consider dividing the writing process into these five steps:

- **Step 1: Brainstorm.** For each required skill, make a list of possible examples that demonstrate your expertise. Think over current and past jobs to see if they relate. Remember to include schoolwork, especially if you are a student or recent graduate. Papers, presentations, and

group projects, for example, all show communication ability.

Next, look for accomplishments that illustrate your qualifications. Note awards, compliments about your work, special projects you completed, and problems you solved. In particular, explain how you used the skill in question to achieve what you did.

If the vacancy announcement asks about your knowledge of a subject, jot down any courses, workshops, or on-the-job training that gave you that knowledge. You might also want to divide the topic into parts and describe what you know about each.

When brainstorming, restate your resume's relevant points. Don't assume that the screener will use your resume to decide if you are qualified.

**Step 2: Choose the best examples.** Select the strongest examples of your skills. Picking three is typical, but there is no set number.

Choose examples that show your level of expertise. Look for your most difficult or responsible work and for work that produced the best results.

Also, consider how closely each example relates to the position you want. When writing about oral communication, for instance, think about what kind of oral communication would be important for the job. If the position requires tact, you might focus on a time you dealt with a customer complaint. If the position requires giving presentations, you might describe your experience in a speech class.

**Step 3: Get specific.** For each example you choose, provide details about it. When and where did it happen? Was it at your current job? A past job? At school? Did it happen once or every day? Start your descriptions by answering these questions. Many people's examples begin with phrases like, "In my current position as a help desk technician, I..." or "As a student at Indiana State University, I..."

Next, be specific about what you did. Rather than simply saying that you wrote many papers while in school, for example, consider describing a

specific paper, noting its length, degree of complexity, intended audience, and any results it produced—such as a good grade or publication in a journal. You might also describe the number of papers you completed in a given period of time. Details like these illustrate your level of expertise better than general statements do.

Finally, don't just summarize your tasks. Instead, explain why your work was important. If you solved a



problem, describe it and what you did to fix it. Explain the positive changes that resulted from your work. Did you save money or time? Were your customers happier? Was a project easier to complete because of what you did? Specific results make narrative statements more compelling.

**Step 4: Write a draft.** The examples you choose will become the basis for your draft. Write one or more paragraphs about each example. Many hiring managers suggest starting with the most important example, and some say that you can summarize the least important examples in a single paragraph at the end.

Consider starting your draft with one or two opening sentences. The sentences could relate to your first example, as in, “During my 3 years as a customer service representative, I have communicated with the public every day.”

Or you could begin with a summary of what you plan to say in the statement, as in, “I strengthened my communication skills while working as a customer service representative and while serving as president of my high school class.”

Another option is to start the draft by explaining why the skill is important to your work or by describing the unique way you use the skill. You might say, “As a secretary, I gather and share essential information every day. My coworkers rely on me to make sure they have the correct information when they need it.”

**Step 5: Proofread.** Read your draft carefully and eliminate repetition, irrelevant examples, and excess words. Check spelling and grammar carefully. Finally,

have at least one other person read the draft and offer suggestions.

### **Questionnaires, tests, and other materials**

Some agencies ask applicants to answer a set of questions about their qualifications. Questions can be multiple-choice, short answer, or a combination of both.

Multiple-choice questions ask you to rate your level of experience or education. Screeners will use your resume to verify the rankings, so be sure to include enough details to back up your answers.

Short-answer questions ask for examples of your education or experience. Answering these questions is a lot like writing the skill statements described in the last section, but answers on questionnaires are usually shorter and more focused.

The reviewer will probably read your answers before reading your resume, so be sure that the answers can stand alone.

**Tests.** A few positions, including those in the Foreign Service and many in law enforcement require applicants to take written or medical tests.

Testing procedures are listed in the vacancy announcement.

The number of occupations requiring tests is much smaller now than in the past. Tests for most clerical positions and most other positions have been eliminated.

**Transcripts and other materials.** Many vacancy announcements ask for a copy of your school transcripts, especially if education is one of your qualifications. Some announcements ask for other materials, such as writing samples or copies of job-related certifications.

### **Writing the impossible KSA statement: What to do if you lack a required skill.**

If you don't have one of the required knowledges, skills, or abilities mentioned in the vacancy announcement, getting the job might be difficult—but not necessarily impossible. Try to address the requirement by discussing related strengths. For example, if experience with a particular type of software is required, you might describe how you use another type of software that is similar.

You could also read books or websites about the software and then describe your research methods, what you learned, and your eagerness to learn more.

If you skip a challenging KSA, you might get skipped; but addressing it shows ingenuity.

## Waiting, interviewing, and accepting the job

After submitting a Federal application, you might have to wait longer for a response than you would when applying for a private sector job. It could take many months. In part, that's because of the thorough applicant ranking process required by law.

But agencies have been working hard to reduce the time that applicants have to wait. In fact, some agencies, such as the U.S. Geological Survey and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, have cut the average time for an initial screening to a few weeks after the closing date.

### What to do while you wait

If an agency uses an automated hiring system, you can check the status of your application by logging on to its employment website. Otherwise, call the contact person. Many human resources specialists suggest waiting at least 3 weeks after the closing date to give agencies time to sort applications. Checking your application's progress is important, because sometimes positions are cancelled and re-opened later.

### Interviewing

Like most managers, Federal managers usually interview applicants before deciding whom to hire. There are no special rules for Federal interviews. You can prepare for them as you would any others. Learn more about the job by visiting the agency website, skimming its publications and mission statements, and reviewing its organizational chart. You also should review the job announcement and your application.

On the day of the interview, give yourself enough time to find the correct office and navigate security procedures. You probably need to bring photo identification, as well as any materials that the hiring manager requests.

You might meet with the hiring manager alone or with a panel of managers and coworkers. The standard advice about interviews applies, including listening well, being ready with specific examples of your skills, and sending thank you notes.

(For advice about interviews, see "Employment interviewing: Seizing the opportunity and the job" in the summer 2000 issue of the *OOQ* and online at [www.bls.gov/opub/ooq/2000/summer/art02.htm](http://www.bls.gov/opub/ooq/2000/summer/art02.htm).)

## Negotiating salary and accepting the job

When you are selected for a job in the Federal Government, a human resources specialist will telephone you with an offer. This is a good time to ask questions about pay and benefits. Negotiating for pay is not as common in Federal work as it is in the private sector because pay ranges are set by law. But agencies do have some flexibility. They can start experienced workers at the high end of the pay range, based on qualifications, market conditions, the applicant's past salary, and agency regulations. Some agencies can also offer signing bonuses, student loan repayment, and relocation assistance.

In addition to answering questions about pay and benefits, the human resources specialist will explain the process of getting a security clearance or other background check, if such checks are required for the job.

If you need time to decide whether to accept the job, ask for it. If you do accept, the specialist will give you a start date and tell the hiring manager—who will probably be your new boss.

On your first day, you will sign or say an oath of office and become a public servant. Then, you can stop the job hunt and start your Federal career!

### Learn more

For more information about the application process, contact the U.S. Office of Personnel Management. This office has created several publications for jobseekers. It also publishes employment regulations, job descriptions, qualifications manuals, and statistics about Federal employment. Contact

U. S. Office of Personnel Management  
1900 E St. NW.

Washington, DC 20415-0001

(202) 606-1800

TTY: (202) 606-2532

[www.opm.gov](http://www.opm.gov)

(Employment information site:

[www.opm.usajobs.gov](http://www.opm.usajobs.gov))

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management also maintains websites for specific types of jobseekers:

- [www.studentjobs.gov](http://www.studentjobs.gov) provides information about jobs for students.
- [www.opm.gov/disability](http://www.opm.gov/disability) provides information tailored to applicants who are disabled.

- [www.opm.gov/veterans](http://www.opm.gov/veterans) provides information about how military skills relate to civilian jobs in the Federal Government and about applying for hiring preferences.

- [www.opm.gov/employ/diversity/hispanic](http://www.opm.gov/employ/diversity/hispanic) provides information about the Bilingual or Bicultural employment program.

The Partnership for Public Service is another source of information. This nonprofit organization encourages college graduates to work for the Federal Government. It publishes advice for students on how to get internships and permanent jobs. Many of its resources are customized for people with specific majors. The Partnership also conducts research on Federal employment and assists career counselors and Federal recruiters. Contact the partnership at

Partnership for Public Service  
1725 Eye St. NW., Suite 900  
Washington DC 20006  
(202) 775-9111  
[www.ourpublicservice.org](http://www.ourpublicservice.org)

For current research on employment practices in the Federal Government, see the reports and newsletters of the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board. Contact the board at

U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board  
1615 M St. NW.  
Washington, DC 20419  
Toll-free: 1 (800) 209-8960  
[www.mspb.gov](http://www.mspb.gov)

Libraries and career centers also provide information on the Federal Government, including books about how to get Government jobs. When choosing books, look for those with recent publication dates because employment regulations change from time to time.

At the library, you also might find two publications from the Bureau of Labor Statistics: the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* and the *Career Guide to Industries*. The *Handbook* describes the job duties, earnings, employment prospects, and training requirements for hundreds of occupations, most of which are found in the Federal Government. The *Career Guide to Industries* includes information about employment in the Federal

Government as a whole. It describes Federal agencies and the industry's earnings, occupations, and employment prospects. These guides are available online at [www.bls.gov/oco](http://www.bls.gov/oco) and [www.bls.gov/cgi](http://www.bls.gov/cgi), respectively.

Lastly, below is contact information for major exempted agencies—they are not required to list all of their openings on the USAJOBS database.

### **Executive branch**

U.S. Agency for International Development  
Recruitment Division  
M/HR/POD/SP, 2.08, RRB  
Washington, DC 20523  
(202) 712-0000  
[www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov)

Central Intelligence Agency  
Office of Human Resource Management  
Washington, DC 20505  
Main number: (703) 482-0623  
Student employment programs and recruitment:  
Toll-free: 1 (800) 368-3886  
[www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov)



Defense Intelligence Agency  
Civilian Personnel Division  
100 MacDill Blvd.  
Washington, DC 20340-5100  
Toll-free: 1 (800) 526-4629  
**www.dia.mil**

Federal Reserve System, Board of Governors  
20th St. and Constitution Ave. NW.  
Washington, DC 20551  
(202) 452-3038  
Toll-free: 1 (800) 448-4894  
**www.federalreserve.gov**

Federal Bureau of Investigation  
J. Edgar Hoover Bldg.  
935 Pennsylvania Ave. NW.  
Washington, DC 20535  
(202) 324-3000  
**www.fbi.gov**

Government Accountability Office  
441 G St. NW.  
Washington, DC 20548  
(202) 512-6092  
**www.gao.gov**

National Security Agency  
College Relations Branch  
Fort Meade, MD 20755  
Toll-free: 1 (866) 672-4473  
**www.nsa.gov**

Tennessee Valley Authority  
Knoxville Office Complex  
400 West Summit Hill Drive  
Knoxville, TN 37902  
(865) 632-2101  
**www.tva.gov**

U.S. Department of State  
Human Resources  
2401 E St. NW, Suite 518 H  
Washington, DC 20522  
(202) 261-8888  
**www.state.gov**

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Division of Human Resources and Employment  
Program Branch  
Washington, DC 20555  
(301) 415-7400  
**www.nrc.gov**

U.S. Postal Service  
Contact local branch.  
**www.usps.com/employment**

### **Judicial branch**

U.S. Federal Courts  
Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts  
Washington, DC 20544  
(202) 502-3800  
**www.uscourts.gov**

### **Legislative branch**

Library of Congress Employment Office  
101 Independence Ave. SE.  
Washington, DC 20540  
(202) 707-5627  
**www.loc.gov**

U.S. House of Representatives  
Chief Administrative Officer  
Human Resources Division  
B72 Ford House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515

U.S. House of Representatives (all other offices)  
B227 Longworth House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 226-4504  
**www.house.gov**

U.S. Senate  
Senate Placement Office  
Senate Hart Bldg., Room 142  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-9167  
**www.senate.gov**

Local addresses and telephone numbers are listed in the blue pages of the telephone book.



# Five steps to a Federal job

## 1) Find job openings.

Search for job openings in the Federal Government by visiting [www.usajobs.opm.gov](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov) or by calling (703) 724-1850. Then, call specific agencies to learn about special hiring programs. Watch for job fairs and newspaper ads, too. Some agencies supplement their recruiting ef-

forts with these traditional methods.

**Tips:** Look beyond job titles; Government titles may be different from those in the private sector. Search by location, keyword, and broad occupational group.

(See pages 7-10.)

## 2) Decode vacancy announcements.

Scan the announcement for its most important parts: Closing date, job description, qualifications, and application instructions.

**Tips:** If you miss a closing date, check to

see if the application period has been extended. Carefully check the required qualifications before applying.

(See pages 14-15.)

## 3) Submit a resume.

If the agency offers an online resume form, fill that out. If the agency accepts paper resumes, fill out the OF-612 application, use the USAJOBS online resume builder, or create a paper resume that lists the following:

- Your name, address, telephone number, Social Security number, and country of citizenship and the vacancy announcement number
- Any college degrees earned or in progress with the month and date of graduation, name and address of the school, type of degree and major, and number of credits earned
- High school diploma or equivalency exam, month and year conferred, and name and address of school
- Any specific courses required for or related to the job

• Employment history—a chronological list of jobs, including job titles; descriptions of duties and accomplishments; names and addresses of employers, months and years of employment; earnings; supervisors' names, addresses, and telephone numbers; and a statement indicating whether your current supervisor may be contacted

- Dates, titles, and grade levels of previous Federal Government jobs
- A statement saying if you are a military veteran who qualifies for preference

**Tips:** Match your experience to the duties and qualifications listed in the job announcement. Use key words from the vacancy announcement, where possible. Include relevant volunteer work.

(See pages 15-18.)

## 4) Develop other required materials.

Some agencies ask for written statements about qualifications. Others require the completion of a questionnaire. A few request copies of college transcripts or other materials.

**Tips:** When writing about your qualifications, be specific and show your expertise. Follow instructions about length, format, and content.

(See pages 18-21.)

## 5) Interview and accept a job offer.

Most, but not all, managers in the Federal Government conduct interviews before selecting a candidate. These interviews are like those in private industry. If you are selected for a job, a human resources specialist will telephone you

with an offer.

**Tips:** Prepare for an interview by researching the agency to which you are applying. Bring picture identification to pass security screening.

(See page 22.)