

THE

# Asian Pacific American

federal career guide

A PUBLICATION OF

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THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND  
THE U.S. OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT



A MESSAGE FROM

## U.S. Secretary of Labor

Elaine L. Chao

Dear Friend:

I am pleased to present you with the Asian Pacific American Federal Career Guide.

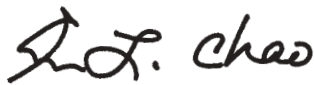
Whether you are new to a career in the federal government or you want to advance within your current federal career, this Federal Career Guide will provide you with helpful information on how to build a rewarding career in the federal government.

The federal government is taking on new challenges every day, and with these challenges come the need for talented and committed men and women ready to serve their country and their fellow citizens. Now is a great time to determine what a career in the federal government might mean in your life.

The number of Asian Pacific Americans in the federal workforce is rising, but there is progress to be made. The purpose of this Federal Career Guide is to help more Asian Pacific Americans become fully aware of the rewards of public service, the skills required for federal jobs, and the resources available to pursue them.

I am committed to assisting Asian Pacific Americans explore careers or seek advancement in the federal government. I hope you find this Federal Career Guide to be a great resource, and I encourage you to share this with others interested in pursuing a rewarding career in the federal government.

Sincerely,



Elaine L. Chao



I am committed

to cultivating a new generation of leaders.

— U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao

A MESSAGE FROM

OPM Director

Kay Coles James

3 The President has issued a call to service and we are looking

Dear Colleagues:

President George W. Bush is proud to lead a Nation with 13 million Americans of Asian or Pacific Island heritage, having previously said that *“Asian/Pacific Americans are also helping to shape America’s future. As entrepreneurs, artists, educators, public servants, scientists, and explorers, they challenge the minds of our next generation, expand commerce and innovation, probe the frontiers of space, and search for cures for the world’s diseases.”*

We must continue to reach out to the outstanding talent in the Asian-Pacific American community to help build the Federal workforce of tomorrow. We have achieved much as a Nation because our strength is founded on our great diversity, with every part of America adding to the rich fabric of our democracy. The tragic events of September 11th have dramatically shown that our strength and depth of commitment are again being tested. Now is the time for Americans to answer our Nation’s call to service – not only our military service -- but the call to work in our Government’s other service -- the United States civil service. There are jobs, indeed there are exciting careers, awaiting many of the very best of you – positions in



health, safety, environment, security, information technology – the list goes on and on. We are a Nation at war, and there are, and will continue to be, strong veterans who have been trained and tested and who now are ready and available to serve their country as civilians. We need them. We need you. We need the very best people our Nation has to offer, from all walks of life, from every wonderful heritage.

This Federal Career Guide is an excellent “Go-To” resource that offers information for everyone – from the newly-hired Federal employee to the senior-level employee looking for professional advancement. The guide also provides web links that direct you to additional information a “customized journey” that you can take to locate additional information that matches your own interests and goals.

I encourage you to take the first step and familiarize yourself with this guide and to visit us at the U.S. Office of Personnel Management at [www.opm.gov](http://www.opm.gov) – the President’s Human Resources advisor and the Federal Government’s “people” agency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kay C. James". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Kay Coles James  
Director

for those who are willing to serve their country.

– OPM Director Kay Coles James

1. Introduction to the Federal Government
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As of September 2003, there are over 1.8 million people who proudly call themselves federal employees. These dedicated Americans have selected the federal government as their employer of choice, where every day they know their work touches the lives of Americans at home and abroad. There is an old Navy recruitment slogan saying, "It's not just a job, it's an adventure." A career in the federal government can be an adventure - offering challenging career opportunities in approximately 900 occupations in this country and in over 180 foreign countries.

The federal government offers entry-level, mid-career and senior management positions for all skill and interest areas. There are federal employees who protect our national parks, perform medical research, predict economic trends, help find affordable housing, train workers for better jobs, enforce the law, and ensure our national security. All these jobs add to the quality of life for every American.

Not only is public service interesting and satisfying, but it also offers great opportunities for training and development, career advancement and mobility. The federal government offers a generous benefits package, including competitive salaries, paid holidays, vacation and sick days, a 401-style savings investment plan, and health and life insurance. Federal employees enjoy a stable and family-friendly environment that offers a good work/life balance.

The federal government is dedicated to building a diverse workforce that reflects the diversity of America, including Asian Pacific Americans. The government wants the best and the brightest. The federal government is an equal opportunity employer. All qualified candidates receive consideration for all positions without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, marital origin, disability, political affiliation, marital status, sexual orientation, or other non-merit factors.

“Serving my fourth tour in the federal government, I am reminded once again of the expectations and responsibilities placed upon me by my peers, my community, and the constituents we serve. It is an honor and a privilege to do such challenging work. I have been especially pleased to see more and more Asian Pacific Americans join me on this career path, and look forward to even greater participation by APAs in the future, particularly in management positions. It is a worthy goal and we are going to achieve it.”

Samuel Mok, Chief Financial Officer, U.S. Department of Labor

# Federal Workforce

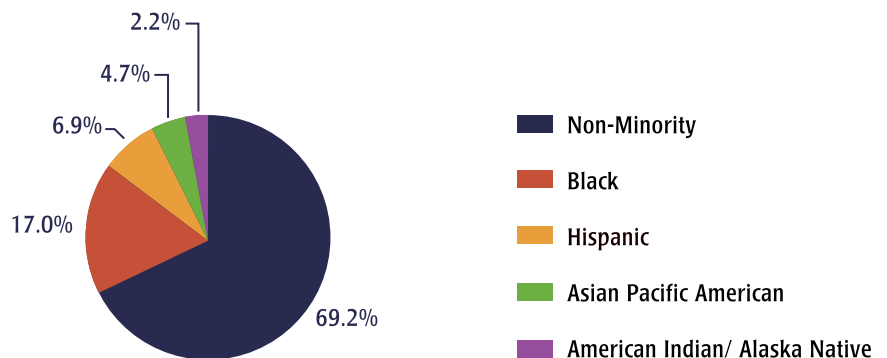
The federal government is the nation's largest employer, with 97% of these employees working in the United States and 16% in the Washington Metropolitan area. This means the majority of federal jobs are outside Washington, D.C. and are available in your state and perhaps even your city! About 94% of federal employees work full-time. The average full-time federal employee is 46.5 years old and has worked 16.8 years in the federal government. Approximately 41% of the federal workforce has a bachelors degree.

According to OPM data, full-time federal employees earn an average of \$58,867. The lowest level of work begins at \$15,625\*, and senior professional employees can earn as much as \$113,674\*. Entry level professionals, usually college graduates, typically start at the GS-5 (\$24,075) or GS-7 (\$29,821) level, and graduates with Masters degrees often start at the GS-9 (\$36,478)\* level. The above salaries do not include a "locality adjustment" used in 31 separate metropolitan areas and a catch-all Rest of U.S. locality pay area. For more information on federal pay rates, visit the OPM Web site at: [www.opm.gov/oca/04tables/indexGS.asp](http://www.opm.gov/oca/04tables/indexGS.asp).

The federal workforce is diverse, with 30.8% comprised of minority groups. Of this, 17% is Black, 6.9% Hispanic, 4.7% Asian Pacific American, and 2.2% American Indian/Alaska Native. Approximately 45% of the federal workforce is female and 7% of the overall workforce are people with disabilities.

The average full-time Asian Pacific American federal employee is 45.6 years old and has worked an average of 12.7 years in government. Approximately 52.2% of Asian Pacific American federal employees have a bachelors degree or higher. The representation of Asian Pacific Americans in upper management within the federal government is charted on the

The Federal Workforce by Race



\* OPM Factbook Data as of September 30, 2003



## APA Representation in Upper Management of Federal Government

FY	% in Total Workforce	% in Supervisory/Management Positions	% in SES
1999	4.4%	3.0%	2.1%
2000	4.5%	3.0%	2.3%
2001	4.6%	3.1%	2.5%
2002	4.8%	3.2%	2.7%

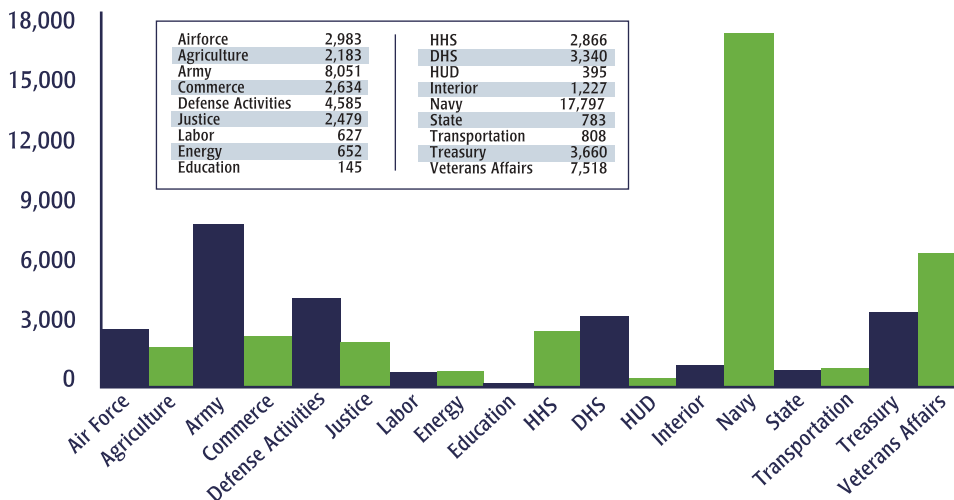
opposite page.\*

In 2002, there were 86,425 Asian Pacific Americans in the federal workforce. The three federal agencies with the highest representation of Asian Pacific Americans are the Department of Navy (10.1%), Department of Commerce (7.4%), and Defense Activities (5.9%). Agencies with the largest numbers of Asian Pacific Americans are the Department of Navy (17,797), the Department of Army (8,051), and

The federal government is committed to the recruitment, development and retention of Asian Pacific Americans. In FY 2002, the federal government had 13,822 Asian Pacific American “new hires.” In FY 2003, 13,628

## Number of APAs in Federal Executive Departments

OPM data as of 09-30-03



the Department of Veterans Affairs (7,518).

## Government Career

Careers with the federal government span the country and the world. With offices in small towns and big cities across America, and embassies all over the globe, there are opportunities wherever you look. A career may send you abroad, keep you close to home or move you around the country. The choices are limitless.

In 2001, the average federal employee had served for about 17 years. By contrast, the median time spent in a private-sector job was about three years. Why do people stay in government jobs so much longer? The main reason is a job with the federal government offers a vast range of career options without sacrificing the opportunity to stay with an employer for a long time.

Of course, you don't have to stay for 17 years. For many, public service has been a career, but that trend is shifting. Over the past few decades, the average length of time a person stays in a job in every sector of private business has decreased, and that is true for the government too. More and more, government service is a career building block for people to acquire skills and move on to something else.

Despite the slow reduction of the overall federal workforce over the past few years, the normal annual attrition of employees (Table 2) and the high projection of future retirements (Table 3) within the workforce means a steady increase in new employment opportunities. In fiscal year 2002, 280,311 new employees joined the federal service.

## New Hires for Fiscal Year 2002

Agencies	Competitive Service Appointments	Excepted Service Appointments	Senior Executive Service (SES) Appointments	TOTALS
Cabinet Level	110,187	154,917	285	265,389
Independent	5,286	9,522	114	14,922
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>115,473</b>	<b>164,439</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>280,311</b>

## Separations for Fiscal Year 2002

Agencies	Quit	Retirement	Reduction in Force (RIF)	Termination or Removal	Death	Other Separation	TOTALS
Cabinet Level	73,139	38,467	1,216	73,935	2,805	55	189,617
Independent	5,278	4,700	144	4,150	304	4	14,580
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>78,417</b>	<b>43,167</b>	<b>1,360</b>	<b>78,085</b>	<b>3,109</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>204,197</b>

## Retirement Projections (Fiscal Years 2002 - 2006)

Retirement	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006
Rate	3.6%	3.8%	3.9%	3.9%
Number	53,673	56,151	57,687	58,889

Note: Projection rates are based on Full-Time Permanent (FTP) base of 1.49 million.

There are many reasons why so many people want to work for the federal government. Federal employment offers challenging professions for all academic majors and interests, career advancement and development, generous benefits, satisfying opportunities, and a satisfying work/life balance.

### Challenging Professions

No matter what your interests and skills are, the federal government presents many career opportunities. There are more than 15 Cabinet departments and hundreds of government agencies with jobs throughout the United States and around the world. These departments and agencies are often tasked with high-profile, life-changing, and time-sensitive projects that make the difference in the lives of all Americans.

### Career Advancement and Development

The federal government is facing an aging workforce, with more than 70% of federal senior executives reaching retirement age in the next few years. As a result, there will be many opportunities for accelerated growth to management and leadership positions for those who are prepared and have the requisite skills.

The federal government offers many opportunities for development and growth. Many federal agencies offer on-the-job training, online training, in-house classroom training or send employees to external training. Some agencies offer tuition reimbursement so employees can continue their education.

In addition, federal agencies offer a variety of development programs to help employees gain the skills they need to advance to the next level.

“My agency encourages higher learning inside and outside the government. As a result, I have been able to take advantage of excellent technical training classes, and the tuition reimbursement they gave me for my master’s degree was a nice surprise. Now I am training others, which is a great way to get the leadership, speaking and networking skills that keep a career moving ahead.”

Daniel Chow, Economist, Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor

**2004 General Schedule**  
(Locality pay is in addition to this base pay)

GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	15,625	16,146	16,666	17,183	17,703	18,009	18,521	19,039	19,060	19,543
2	17,568	17,985	18,567	19,060	19,274	19,841	20,408	20,975	21,542	22,109
3	19,168	19,807	20,446	21,085	21,724	22,363	23,002	23,641	24,280	24,919
4	21,518	22,235	22,952	23,669	24,386	25,103	25,820	26,537	27,254	27,971
5	24,075	24,878	25,682	26,484	27,287	28,090	28,893	29,696	30,499	31,302
6	26,836	27,731	28,626	29,521	30,416	31,311	32,206	33,101	33,996	34,891
7	29,821	30,815	31,809	32,803	33,797	34,791	35,785	36,779	37,773	38,767
8	33,026	34,127	35,228	36,329	37,430	38,531	39,632	40,733	41,834	42,935
9	36,478	37,694	38,910	40,126	41,342	42,558	43,774	44,990	46,206	47,422
10	40,171	41,510	42,849	44,188	45,527	46,866	48,205	49,544	50,883	52,222
11	44,136	45,607	47,078	48,549	50,020	51,491	52,962	54,433	55,904	57,375
12	52,899	54,662	56,425	58,188	59,951	61,714	63,477	65,240	67,003	68,766
13	62,905	65,002	67,099	69,196	71,293	73,390	75,487	77,584	79,681	81,778
14	74,335	76,813	79,291	81,769	84,247	86,725	89,203	91,681	94,159	96,637
15	87,439	90,354	93,269	96,184	99,099	102,014	104,929	107,844	110,759	113,674

The salary schedule on this page changes from time to time. To get the most up-to-date salary schedule or to find out the locality pay for your area, visit [www.opm.gov/oca](http://www.opm.gov/oca).

## Make a Difference

Federal employees often say they chose a career in the federal government to “make a difference.” Many employees spend their whole professional lives in the government and build satisfying and fulfilling careers.

## Generous Salary and Benefits Package

Most government positions fall under the General Schedule (GS) salary scale. (See below or view all salary tables at [www.opm.gov/oca/04tables/indexGS.asp](http://www.opm.gov/oca/04tables/indexGS.asp))

As noted earlier, the lowest level of work begins at GS-1, \$15,625. Senior professional positions earn as much as \$113,674\*. College graduates typically start at the GS-5 (\$24,075)\* or GS-7 (\$29,821)\* level, and graduates with Masters degrees often will start at the GS-9 (\$36,478)\* level. Top managers in the government, those in the Senior Executive Service (SES), earn between \$104,927 and \$145,600. Under recently enacted legislation, SES members covered by a certified appraisal system will be able to earn up to \$158,100.

Federal employees typically receive an annual pay adjustment and are eligible for periodic within-grade increases every 1, 2, or 3 years. If an employee has performed well, they can earn a performance bonus and/or a promotion to the next level.

Federal employees enjoy:

- 10 paid holidays each year;
- 13-26 vacation days each year, depending on length of service;
- 13 sick days each year;
- 401(k)-style savings and investment plan (Thrift Savings Plan);
- Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS);
- Shared-cost health coverage;
- Health care and dependent care flexible spending accounts;
- Life insurance; and
- Family friendly environment.

In addition, many federal agencies offer:

- Training and career development programs;
- Flexible work schedules and telecommuting;
- Health and child/elder care programs;
- Employee assistance programs;
- Assistive services and technology;
- Transportation subsidy;
- On-site child care and child care subsidy for qualified individuals;
- On-site gym facilities; and
- Student loan repayment.

Applying for a job in the federal government can sometimes be confusing. However, the

\*This is base pay and does not include a “locality adjustment.” Employees living in certain areas of the country receive a regional adjustment added to their basic pay to account for the cost of living in that area. For example, a GS-9 in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area will have a locality adjustment of 14.63% and therefore earns \$41,815 annually. A GS-9 will earn \$43,139 (18.26%) in Chicago, \$43,515 in New York (19.29%), and \$45,309 in San Francisco (24.21%).

Applying for a job in the federal government can sometimes be confusing. However, the process is not so hard if broken down into three simple steps: 1) finding a job opening, 2) reading the vacancy announcement, and 3) completing the application.

### Step 1: Finding a job opening

To begin a job search for federal employment, the best place to start is the USAJOBS Web site found at [www.usajobs.opm.gov](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov).

USAJOBS is the official job site of the federal government and has general information about careers in the federal government. USAJOBS allows potential applicants to complete an “interest questionnaire” to see what career areas fit their interests and the occupations associated with those areas, conduct a targeted search of over 15,000 current job openings on any given day, get standard government application forms, create and store up to five resumes, receive email notification when a new “vacancy announcement” is posted, and often apply online.

USAJOBS is also accessible by telephone at (703) 724-1850 or TDD (478) 461-8404. All federal jobs that are open to applicants who

are not current or returning federal employees are announced on USAJOBS and/or on the hiring agency’s Web site.

Additional Web sites with specific job information include OPM’s e-Scholar which provides students (high school and higher), parents, and career professionals with information on different educational opportunities offered by federal government departments and agencies or partnering organizations. This includes information on apprenticeships, cooperative education programs, fellowships, grants, internships and scholarships. <http://www.studentjobs.gov/e-scholar.asp>

Senior management positions are listed on the Senior Executive Service Web site at [www.opm.gov/ses/wwhw.html](http://www.opm.gov/ses/wwhw.html).

A list of all federal departments and agency Web sites where they list agency job openings can be found at [www.firstgov.gov/Agencies/Federal/All\\_Agencies/index.shtml](http://www.firstgov.gov/Agencies/Federal/All_Agencies/index.shtml)

Federal job openings may also be advertised in college career services offices, in newspapers and magazines, and other venues where federal agencies try to reach possible candidates. Federal agencies also participate in academic and professional job fairs.

“Since joining the federal government over 20 years ago, I have been blessed with so many career opportunities. I am constantly challenged by the Office of Management and Budget and the Congress to keep up with the latest laws and regulations on information technology, and I always learn something new in the process.”

Nancy Huang, Chief Information Officer,  
NOAA Research, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce

## Step 2: Reading the Vacancy Announcement

A “vacancy announcement” is government jargon for a current job opening. It “announces” to the public that a job is available and is an invitation for candidates to apply for that job. The vacancy announcement is a description of the job and specifies what qualifications are required and how to apply.

Although federal agencies are trying to standardize the federal application process, there may be variations from agency to agency. Therefore, carefully read each vacancy announcement.

The vacancy announcement includes the following key pieces of information:

**Position Title** – the title of the job, an indicator of what the job is about;

**Announcement Number** – the identifying number for the position which you must include on your application materials;

**Grade Level** – the level of the job, an indicator of the complexity of the job and the amount of responsibility associated with the position;

**Salary** – the salary range of the position;

**Promotion Potential** – the highest GS level you can be promoted to for this specific job;

**Location or “Duty Station”** – the location of the job and what percentage of travel is required for the job, if applicable;

**Open and Close Dates** – the time frame of when the agency will accept applications;

**Areas of Consideration** – who is eligible to apply for the position:

- i. “Status” – for current or former government employees
- ii. “Non-status” – for all applicants (it may also say “All Sources”);

**Duties and Responsibilities** – an overview and/or day-to-day description of the job;

**Job Qualifications** – what is required of applicants in order to be considered;

**Other** – any other requirements, such as writing samples, written tests, physical fitness tests, drug tests, security clearances, or previous performance appraisals;

**Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs)** – the qualifications and personal attributes an applicant needs to have in order to successfully perform the job. These are also known as evaluation factors, rating factors, or core competencies. As noted below, many agencies have replaced KSAs with online self-assessment questions;

**U.S. Citizenship** – most federal positions require U.S. citizenship, although there are exceptions. The vacancy announcement will state whether U.S. citizenship is required.

### Step 3: Completing the Application

Federal agencies may have agency specific procedures for applying for a position so carefully read all directions in the vacancy announcement to ensure the application is prepared correctly.

Most agencies require a resume, OF-612 or SF-171 (government forms). No form is necessarily better than the other, however, the government forms prompt an applicant to include detailed information that might not be included in a standard one-page resume. Therefore, if using a resume, be sure to include detailed information and do not limit it to one page.

When preparing a government resume, include the following information:

#### Job Information

- Announcement number;
- Title and grade of the position.

#### Personal Information

- Full name, mailing address (with zip code);
- Day and evening phone numbers (with area code);
- Veterans' preference\* (if applicable);
- Country of citizenship;
- Reinstatement eligibility (if applicable);
- Highest Federal civilian grade held (if applicable).

#### Education

- High school: Name, city, and state, date of diploma or GED;
- Colleges or universities: Name, city, state, zip code;
- Majors: Type and year of degree(s) received (If no degree, show total credits earned and indicate whether semester or quarter hour);
- Send a copy of college transcript only if requested by vacancy announcement;

#### Work Experience (paid and non-paid)

- Job title;
- Starting and ending dates;
- Salary;
- Employer's name and address;
- Supervisor's name and phone number;
- Hours worked per week;
- Duties and accomplishments;
- Indicate if contact is permissible with current supervisor;
- Other Qualifications.

#### Other Relevant Information

- Job-related training courses (title and year);
- Job-related skills, i.e., other languages, computer software/hardware skills, tools, machinery, typing speed.
- Job-related certificates and licenses;
- Job-related honors, awards, and special accomplishments, (e.g., publications, memberships in professional or honor societies, leadership activities, public speaking, and performance awards).

\* Those who have served in the U.S. military on active duty and received an honorable or general discharge may be eligible for veterans' preference and possibly for a noncompetitive appointment. For specific information on the veterans' preference, access the VetGuide on OPM's Web site at [www.opm.gov/veterans/html/vetguide.htm](http://www.opm.gov/veterans/html/vetguide.htm).



**HINT**

Once prepared, your federal applications will include several pages. Therefore, it is recommended to include identifying information on all sections or pages of the application such as your name, social security number, and announcement number.

## More About KSAs

In the past, “Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities” (KSAs) have been a standard in government applications. KSAs are also known as evaluation factors, rating factors, or core competencies. Although many agencies are now using online questions in lieu of this aspect of government applications, some still use them. Therefore, below is a description of how to prepare this component of the application.

Although the resume or OF-612 may explain how an applicant has the KSAs required for the position, it is strongly recommended to provide a separate narrative statement in addition to the resume or OF-612. In this narrative statement, an applicant should articulate how specific education, work, professional or volunteer experience demonstrate he or she possesses each KSA listed in the vacancy announcement. Addressing each individual KSA will make an application stronger.

For example, "oral communication skill" could be demonstrated by a presentation given to colleagues or customers, active membership in a campus speaking association or club, or by successful work as a volunteer academic tutor.

KSAs help the Human Resources Office determine whether applicants meet the basic eligibility or “minimum qualifications” of the job. In addition, they are used to determine which applicants are best qualified for the job and will make the “Certificate of Eligibles.” This “Cert” is forwarded to the hiring manager where he or she will again review the KSAs to determine which applicants will be invited for an interview.

## Additional Documentation

Many federal applications will ask for additional supporting information such as transcripts, additional government forms, or questionnaires. Please read and follow directions carefully to ensure the application is complete.

## Contact the Agency

The vacancy announcement will always include a contact name (or office) and a phone number. If an applicant has any questions about how to complete the application, he or she should call this number. Applicants can also call this number to confirm whether their application has been received and is complete, and what the status is of the vacancy announcement.

**HINT**

An incomplete application or resume often precludes an applicant from further consideration. Therefore, make sure to read all instructions carefully and include all requested information.

**HINT**

Mail, express mail, hand deliver or fax your application to the correct location well in advance of the closing date. The application must be post marked or received no later than close of business (C.O.B.) of the stated application deadline closing date. If the application is late, you may not be considered for the position.

**HINT**

Tailor each application (resume and KSAs) to the specific job for which you are applying.

## Special Hiring Authorities

In addition to the standard hiring method noted above, there are several exceptions to the rule. These exceptions are called “special hiring authorities” and permit federal agencies to hire through a different or abbreviated method. Some of these programs include:

**Student Programs:** There are many opportunities in government for high school, college and graduate students, including part-time, full-time, and temporary positions that can lead to permanent full-time employment. Explore these opportunities at: [www.studentjobs.gov](http://www.studentjobs.gov).

**Summer Employment:** Summer job opportunities are available in federal agencies throughout the United States and cover a wide variety of positions. Summer positions are listed on USAJOBS and on agency Web sites. Explore these opportunities at: [www.usajobs.opm.gov/ei19.ASP](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/ei19.ASP).

**Student Educational Employment Program:** The Student Educational Employment Program provides employment opportunities for students enrolled or accepted for enrollment as degree-seeking students taking at least a half-time academic, technical, or vocational course load in an accredited

high school, technical, vocational, two- or four-year college or university, graduate or professional school. This program has two components: the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) and the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP). Students in the SCEP may convert to a permanent position following completion of their academic and work experience requirements. Explore these opportunities at: [www.opm.gov/employ/students](http://www.opm.gov/employ/students).

**Outstanding Scholars Program:** The Outstanding Scholar and Bilingual/Bicultural programs were established to address the under-representation of African Americans and Hispanics in the federal government. However, the programs have never been restricted to those designated minority groups. The program hires college graduates from accredited schools with a grade point average of 3.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale. It can also be used to hire those who are in the upper 10% of their graduating class or in a major university subdivision such as a College of Arts and Sciences. These appointments are made without going through the standard hiring process for jobs at the GS-5 and GS-7 levels in covered occupations. Check out this program at: [www.opm.gov/employ/luevano.htm](http://www.opm.gov/employ/luevano.htm).

**Presidential Management Fellows Program:** The Presidential Management Fellows Program provides an opportunity for individuals completing a graduate degree to receive an excepted service appointment for two years in the Executive Branch. During this two year period Fellows receive formal training, individual development assignments and the opportunity for rotational experiences between agencies. These assignments and learning experiences prepare the Fellow for future leadership positions within the federal civil service. For more information: [www.pmf.opm.gov](http://www.pmf.opm.gov).

**Senior Presidential Management Fellows Program:** The Senior Presidential Management Fellows Program provides an opportunity for individuals completing a graduate degree who have a demonstrated history of outstanding leadership, managerial, and/or professional/technical work experience to receive an excepted service appointment for two years in the Executive Branch. During this two year period Senior Fellows receive formal training, individual development assignments and the opportunity for rotational experiences between agencies. These assignments and learning experiences prepare the Senior Fellow for SES leadership positions within the federal civil service.

**Student Career Intern Program:** The Federal Career Intern Program is designed to help agencies recruit and attract exceptional individuals into a variety of occupations. It is intended for positions at the GS-5, GS-7, and GS-9 levels. In general, individuals are appointed to a two-year internship. Upon successful completion of the internships, the interns may be eligible for permanent placement within an agency. Those interested in this program must contact specific agencies directly. OPM does not provide a central source for career internship programs. Check out this program at: [www.opm.gov/careerintern](http://www.opm.gov/careerintern).

**Scholarship for Service Programs:** Scholarship For Service (SFS) is a unique program designed to increase and strengthen the cadre of federal information assurance professionals (information technology/cyber security) that protect the government's critical information infrastructure. This program provides fully-funded scholarships that include tuition, room and board and books. Participants also receive stipends of up to \$8,000 for undergraduate and \$12,000 for graduate students. Students funded for more than a year will also serve a paid internship at a federal agency. In exchange for the scholarship and stipend, students agree to work for the federal government for a period equivalent to the length of the scholarship or one year, whichever is longer. Check out this program at: [www.sfs.opm.gov](http://www.sfs.opm.gov).

“The lesson to me was **take every opportunity** that comes along, and always let your manager know what your interests are. If you don't ask, nobody will know what you want. **Persistence pays off.**”

**Nilda D. Godwin, Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture**

## Advancement and Development

### Career Advancement

Once federal employees become “permanent” (also known as “having status”), they can enjoy the stability and benefits of staying with one employer, but can still grow as a professional by finding new and challenging positions by moving within their agency or from agency to agency.

In 2001, the average number of years spent in federal service was almost 17 years. By contrast, the median time spent in a private-sector job was approximately 3 years. Why do people stay in government jobs so much longer? The primary reason is because the federal government offers career options without sacrificing the opportunity to stay with the same employer.

In addition, the federal workforce is experiencing a large turnover in upper management due to future retirements. It is estimated that one in every five federal managers will retire in the next five years, meaning there is room for growth, promotion and leadership opportunities throughout the federal government.

### Career Development

The federal government is committed to employee training and development. There are many available programs as well as individual agency initiatives to help federal employees obtain the skills and training necessary for career advancement and development.

**Training:** Although it may vary agency-to-agency, most federal agencies offer some combination of on-the-job training, in-house classroom training, online training, and external training from professional training institutes or associations. Some agencies offer tuition reimbursement, and many federal employees continue their education and complete a college or graduate degree. OPM offers training specifically for the federal employee, providing skills needed to successfully perform and/or advance in their career.

For example, the Federal Executive Institute and the Management Development Centers are dedicated to developing career leaders for the federal government. There are locations in Charlottesville, Virginia, Shepherdstown, West Virginia, and Denver, Colorado that offer exceptional residential learning environments and are staffed with program directors, seminar leaders, and facilitators drawn from America's elite corps of training professionals. For more information, visit [www.leadership.opm.gov](http://www.leadership.opm.gov).

“ I have the satisfaction of knowing that the job I do helps ensure the financial security of American workers. My career with the federal government has given me the opportunity to do such fulfilling work, along with the flexibility to meet the needs of my family. It is a great combination.”

Karin Weng, Pension Law Specialist, Employee Benefits Security Administration, U.S. Department of Labor

The Graduate School at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) also offers training geared for federal employees. Check this program out at: [www.grad.usda.gov](http://www.grad.usda.gov).

**Agency Career Development Programs:**

In addition to training, the federal government and individual agencies offer career development programs. These programs incorporate training and development activities that enable participants to position themselves to move up to the next level.

**Administrative Staff Development:** Some federal agencies have career development programs to specifically train and develop administrative staff. For example, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has three developmental programs for support staff: the Certified Professional Secretaries Program, which enables secretaries to obtain at least college credits in six different disciplines, the Computer Science Program, and the Administrative Skills Enhancement Program.

**Mid-Career Development Programs:**

Several agencies offer mid-level career development programs. For example, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) designed a Mid-Level Development Program to develop supervisory, managerial and leadership skills of high-performing, mid-level employees in the Office of

Administration. The 16-month program consisted of a mix of formal training, developmental on-the-job assignments, required readings, seminars, and the establishment of professional relationships. The Department of Labor (DOL) created the Management Development Programs for GS-13s and GS-14s. This program prepares mid-level employees for leadership through intensive training, mentoring, 360-degree feedback, and a regional rotation. Upon completion of the program, participants can be promoted non-competitively to the next level.

**SES Candidate Development Programs:**

Senior Executive Service (SES) Candidate Development Programs (CDPs) are competitive programs designed by agencies to create pools of qualified candidates for the government's top management positions. CDP's include a variety of activities that prepare participants for success in the SES so they are well positioned to lead change both within their agencies and throughout the federal government. SES CDP programs are announced on agency Web sites. Check them out at: [www.opm.gov/ses/candevprg.html](http://www.opm.gov/ses/candevprg.html).

**Aspiring Leader Program (GS-5-7):** The Aspiring Leader Program prepares federal employees at the GS-5-7 levels for positions as team leaders, supervisors and managers.

**New Leader Program (GS-7-11):** The New Leader Program (NLP) is a six-month leadership development program designed to develop future public service leaders by providing assessment, experiential learning and individual development opportunities. The program develops future public service leaders by providing a solid training and development foundation of leadership skills and team building, which are enhanced by agency developmental experiences.

**Executive Leadership Program (GS-11-13):** The Executive Leadership Program (ELP) is a 12-month nationwide program open to individuals at the GS-11-13 levels who have little or no supervisory experience. ELP provides residential training, developmental work experiences, needs assessment and career planning, which gives participants the skills, experience and exposure to move into positions of more responsibility.

**Executive Potential Program (GS-13-15):** The Executive Potential Program is a year-long competency-based leadership program designed to develop senior-level public service employees into more effective leaders. The Program is based on the Office of Personnel Management's Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) and the Graduate School, USDA's Leadership Effectiveness Inventory (LEI).

**Congressional Fellows Program (GS-13-15):** The Congressional Fellows Program provides an opportunity for senior level personnel (GS/GM-13-15 or uniform service equivalents), to work in congressional offices or with committee staff members to develop legislative issues.

**Senior Executive Service (SES) Developmental Seminars (GS-14-15):** At the Graduate School, USDA offers SES seminars designed to help participants position themselves for selection into SES. Each seminar reflects different key components of OPM's Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs).

**Congressional Seminar Series:** These programs are designed to help participants gain a more thorough understanding of legislative operations, the culture of Congress, and the way their actions affect a federal agency and its mission.

**Human Resources Professional Development Leadership Program:** In partnership with the Federal Section of the International Personnel Management Association (IPMA), the six-month Human Resources (HR) Professional Development Leadership Program is designed to prepare GS-12 and GS-13 HR professionals for future leadership positions and provides a new perspective on evolving HR roles.

## Federal learning and exchange programs

**Intergovernmental Personnel Act Mobility Program:** The Intergovernmental Personnel Act Mobility Program provides for the temporary assignment of personnel between the federal government and state and local governments, colleges and universities, Indian tribal governments, federally-funded research and development centers, and other eligible organizations. [www.opm.gov/programs/ipa](http://www.opm.gov/programs/ipa).

**Detail and Transfer of Federal Employees to International Organizations:** An agency may detail or transfer an employee to any organization designated by OPM as an approved international organization. A detail or transfer may not exceed five years but may be extended 3 additional years upon the approval of the head of the agency. A transferred employee is entitled to be reemployed in his or her former position or one of like status and pay within 30 days of his or her application for reemployment. For more information, visit: [www.opm.gov/employ/internat](http://www.opm.gov/employ/internat).

**Executive In Resident Program:** Executives in Residence are career government executives who serve as visiting full-time faculty members at three residential learning facilities. [www.leadership.opm.gov/content.cfm?CAT=EIRP](http://www.leadership.opm.gov/content.cfm?CAT=EIRP).

For other career transition resources, please visit: [www.opm.gov/ctap](http://www.opm.gov/ctap).

## Individual career enhancing activities

**Rotational Assignments and Details:** Many agencies offer short-term “rotational assignment” or “details” where employees are sent to a new office to learn a new subject area, gain breadth in their occupation or increase their level of expertise so that they better perform their job when they return to their home office and/or prepare to move ahead in their career. A rotational assignment, or more often called a detail, is also beneficial to the host office when it may need temporary assistance during a period of heavy workload or to fill a temporary vacancy.

**Mentoring:** Mentoring is a way to learn from a senior professional, usually within an employee’s own career field. Generally, there are three different kinds of mentoring: (1) Supervisory mentoring consists of the day-to-day coaching and guidance that an employee receives from their supervisor; (2) Informal mentoring is an unofficial pairing of individuals that naturally occurs between people as needs arise; and (3) Structured -- facilitated mentoring is the most formal type of mentoring, consisting of planned, sequenced steps, and is organizationally sponsored. Many agencies use formal mentoring programs to develop a well-trained and versatile workforce.

**Professional Associations:** Many occupations have national and local professional associations. Federal employees are encouraged to join a professional association for training, networking, and general career growth. Professional memberships can often be paid for by federal agencies and are a good way to stay abreast of current information and developments in the field.

### Awards and Bonus Programs

Many awards and bonus programs are used to recruit, reward, and retain high performing employees. Examples include:

**Performance Award:** A monetary award based on an employee's performance rating.

**Special Act Award:** A monetary or time-off award based on a special act or service in the public interest that is beyond an employee's normal job requirements.

**Other Awards:** Monetary, nonmonetary, honorary, and time-off awards may also be based on an employee's suggestions, inventions, superior accomplishments, or goal achievement. For more information: <http://www.opm.gov/perform/reward.asp>.

### Recruitment and Retention Incentives

**Recruitment Bonus:** A lump-sum recruitment bonus may be paid to new employees appointed to difficult-to-fill positions. The bonus may be up to 25% of basic pay, and employees must fulfill a service agreement of at least 6 months. For more information: <http://www.opm.gov/oca/pay/HTML/RECBONFS.HTM>.

**Relocation Bonus:** A lump-sum relocation bonus may be paid to current employees to relocate to accept a difficult-to-fill position in a different commuting area. The bonus may be up to 25% of basic pay, and employees must fulfill a service agreement specified by the employing agency. For more information: <http://www.opm.gov/oca/pay/HTML/RELBONFS.HTM>.

**Retention Allowance:** A retention allowance may be paid to retain current employees with unusually high or unique qualifications or when the employing agency has a special need for an employee's services and the agency determines that the employee is likely to leave federal service. The retention allowance may be up to 25% of basic pay. For more information: <http://www.opm.gov/oca/pay/HTML/RETALLFS.HTM>.

**Student Loan Repayment:** An agency may offer a student loan repayment of up to \$10,000 a year to recruit and retain an employee. For more information: <http://www.opm.gov/oca/pay/StudentLoan/index.asp>.



A career in the federal government is challenging, but also rewarding. The federal government needs the best and brightest to serve this country for the betterment of our nation. The contributions federal employees make today, tomorrow, and in the future ensures that America will remain a world leader and successfully respond to the challenges of the 21st century.

“Government service is all about **continuous professional growth**. It has been a privilege to work on high profile projects that require strategic thinking, creativity, writing, and strong interpersonal skills. The net result has been **an outstanding learning experience**. I have lots of interests and enjoy change, and my career in the federal government has given me the best of both.”

Lynn Kim, Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist, Employee Standards Administration, U.S. Department of Labor



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