Frequently Asked Questions on Applying for Federal Employment

Where can I find information about federal jobs?

USAJOBS at **www.usajobs.gov** is the official job site of the U.S. government. It is where nearly all federal agencies post their civilian vacancy announcements. USAJOBS has thousands of job listings (updated daily), and allows you to submit your application directly on-line. You can build and save up to five resumes on the USAJOBS website so that you can tailor your wording to the type of job for which you are applying.

What is a "civilian employee"?

A civilian is basically a federal employee that is not active duty military. Nearly all civilian positions in the Air Force, Army, Navy, etc., require no military commitment whatsoever. Those few civilian positions that do require you to be in the Reserves or the National Guard clearly say so in the job announcement.

NOTE: Contractors (e.g., Lockheed Martin, BAE Systems, Northrop-Grumman, etc.,) are **not** civilian employees, even if they might work at Hill Air Force Base. Contractor jobs are **not** advertised on USAJOBS.

How can I search and apply for federal civilian jobs where I want to work?

1. Go to **www.usajobs.gov**

2. In the "Location" block, enter your hometown and state (or the city and state where you are willing to relocate). **If you want to see only jobs at or near Hill, enter "Hill AFB".**

3. Click on the blue "Search" key.

4. A list will appear showing federal jobs available within a 20 mile radius of the location you selected. (You may adjust the radius to refine your search.) There will likely be several pages of announcements.

5. Select an announcement that you want to view.

6. Review the "Job Requirements" section of the announcement to see if you qualify.

7. To apply for the job, carefully follow the instructions on the "How to Apply" and "Required Documents" tabs on the upper right side of the announcement.

8. Save or print a copy of the job announcement for future reference.

For which positions can I apply?

Each USAJOBS job announcement explains exactly who may apply. When you set up your USAJOBS account there are questions to help you determine if you can only apply for jobs open to the general public, or if you are a "status candidate" who might also be able to respond to more restrictive announcements.

What are "status candidates"?

Status candidates include (but are not limited to):

1) **Current federal civilian employees** on non-temporary positions in the competitive service.

2) **Former federal civilian employees** with reinstatement rights.
https://help.usajobs.gov/index.php/What_is_reinstatement%3F_Am_I_eligible%3F

3) **Certain veterans** eligible under the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA).
https://www.fedshirevets.gov/job/shav/index.aspx/

4) **Persons with non-competitive appointment eligibility** (due to disability, displacement, etc.)

USAJOBS seems overwhelming – where do I start?

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1. Create your USAJOBS account. Go to the USAJOBS website at **www.usajobs.gov** and click on "Create an account to get started" at the top of the page. This will allow you to build your profile, create or upload resumes and other documents, apply for jobs, set up job announcement alerts, etc.

2. Set up a Saved Search to be emailed about job announcements you don't want to miss. Once you have created a USAJOBS account, click on "Saved Searches" in the menu column. Click on the blue "Create a new saved search" tab and fill out your criteria about location, occupation, pay, etc. You can create up to 10 separate searches and will be emailed when new jobs meeting your criteria are posted on USAJOBS.

3. Check out the Help Center for USAJOBS. Go to **www.usajobs.gov/Help** and browse through advice, tutorials and specialized information on applying for federal employment. This site makes USAJOBS easy.

4. Watch the Hill AFB video about USAJOBS: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8BicxsWEY6c

5. Go to the Utah Dept. of Workforce Services: https://jobs.utah.gov/jobseeker/workshops/north/index.html

6. Email Hill AFB for assistance. Email your questions about USAJOBS to: **Hill.AFB.Outreach@us.af.mil**

Do engineer and computer scientist candidates need to apply on USAJOBS?

It depends... For a few critical-shortage occupations that are in high demand, DoD agencies are allowed to accept resumes directly, and then name-request candidates who are well-qualified using Expedited Hiring Authority (EHA). This allows recruiters to collect resumes at job fairs, universities, etc.

Because Hill AFB has **hundreds of engineer and scientist vacancies each year**, the Science and Engineering Recruitment Team collects and manages resumes for viewing by supervisors who have engineer and scientist job openings. NOTE: Student intern programs still require candidates to apply on USAJOBS.

In order to maximize your visibility with selecting officials across Hill AFB, if you have a BS or higher degree in computer science, engineering (sorry, **not engineering technology**), or other professional scientific field, it is a good idea to apply through USAJOBs and also directly submit your resume (and your unofficial transcripts) to **AFSC.ENRW.EngineeringHiring@us.af.mil**

How do I know what federal jobs and grade levels I am qualified for?

Each job announcement identifies specific qualification requirements (e.g., education, experience level, physical requirements, etc.). If you want to figure out the various occupations for which you are qualified, a good place to start is the *Handbook of Occupational Groups and Families* at: **www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/classification-qualifications/classifying-federal-wage-system-positions**

As you scroll through the definitions for each occupational "series" (4-digit classification code), you will find hyperlinks to an occupation's classification or job grading standard, which is a treasure trove of valuable info:

- It explains the government terminology so that you can better understand what the vacancy announcement means. Use these terms on your resume to connect your experience to the job being filled.
  (NOTE: There is **no truth to the rumor** that USAJOBS resumes are scanned for key words!!!)

- It describes the typical duties and responsibilities of jobs in the occupation, and you can often see how your personal experience relates to the work being described.

- It differentiates between the work performed at different pay grade levels so that you can see what grade level is the closest match for your past experience, and what next higher grade level you might qualify for in that federal occupation.

What will my salary be?

Pay System Codes. The letters (WG, WL, WS, GS, AcqDemo, etc.) in the "Series and Grade" block of an announcement represent the federal pay system for the job. Skills-based (trades and crafts) occupations start with WG, WL or WS and are paid hourly rates. Knowledge-based occupations start with GS, AcqDemo or other letters and are paid annual salary rates.

Pay Grade Tables for federal jobs in Utah.

There are 15 pay grades in the General Schedule (GS) pay system, and each grade has ten steps. For current GS salaries go to **http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/salary-tables/pdf/2016/RUS.pdf**

There are 15 pay grades in the Federal Wage System (FWS), which includes WG, WL and WS pay plans. Each grade has five steps. Current FWS rates: **https://www.cpms.osd.mil/Content/AF%20Schedules/survey-sch/139/139R-15Sep2015.html**

The DoD Civilian Acquisition Workforce Personnel Demonstration Project (AcqDemo) is a Congressionally-mandated project with pay bands instead of pay grades: **http://acqdemo.hci.mil/broadband.html**

Pay Grade Steps. You will typically be placed in the first step of the pay grade for which you are selected. Occasionally, exceptions can be made for applicants with hard-to-find and highly-desirable skills. Employees in certain occupations and/or geographic areas may also receive special, higher rates of pay. In certain situations, agencies and organizations may be able to offer recruitment, relocation, or retention incentives.

Jobs with Advertised Promotion Potential. If you are qualified at a grade level lower than you think you can accept, make sure that you ask whether or not the position is targeted to a higher grade. *In some cases you may be hired at a lower pay grade, and are then eligible for career promotions without competition as long as you are performing successfully.* Ask how far apart these career promotions would occur. In some cases you will only have to be at the entry grade for six months.

It is not all about the salary!!! Consider carefully before turning down an opportunity for a federal position based only on pay. A generous leave program, extensive health care options, the Thrift Savings Plan with matching funds, job security, flexible work schedules, fitness time – there are numerous benefits to consider before you decide. Get info about federal benefits at: **https://help.usajobs.gov/index.php/Pay_and_Benefits**

Is a one-page resume good enough when applying for federal jobs?

In the private sector, a one-page resume highlighting your work experience and education is all that is needed to get you a first interview. That is **not** how it works in the federal government.

Information in your resume and other documents required in the announcement are used to rate you as qualified/unqualified, and to rank you against other eligible candidates. **Think of your federal resume as your first interview.**

Think of Job Elements and Knowledges, Skills and Abilities **(KSAs)** listed in the announcement as interview questions. While the federal government no longer requires you to separately address Job Elements or KSAs, **you are still being ranked against them.** Make sure that you clearly address each one in the description of your work experience so that you can get maximum credit in the ranking process.

Don't be tempted to lump many years of experience into one block on your resume. Raters cannot assume anything – you must include details, or you will not get needed credit for specialized experience. Even if you worked for many years at the same company or in the military, you likely had more than one kind of job. Divide your relevant job experience into logical blocks to get best results.

How do I know if I will be able to get a security clearance?

Some people avoid applying for positions because of the requirement for a security clearance. If you have an isolated incident in your past, and you are open and truthful about the situation during the background investigation, this is often not a problem. The following websites may help you decide if obtaining a security clearance will likely be an issue for you: **http://usmilitary.about.com/cs/generalinfo/a/security.htm**   or: **http://jobsearchtech.about.com/od/governmentjobs/l/aa_security_2.htm**

Once you have been offered a job (contingent upon satisfactory completion of a background investigation), you will be required to complete a Standard Form 86, *Questionnaire for National Security Positions.* For further information regarding background investigations you may visit the OPM investigations website at **http://www.opm.gov/investigate/index.aspx**

How can I make my resume stand out from hundreds of others?

You need your application to stand out because so many people apply for federal jobs. A good way to do this is to focus on outcomes by giving examples of your work projects, and the results or impact of the work you performed.

- **Include what occurred.** Did you improve the workplace? What major projects or programs did you work? Did you refine technology tools, create programs, or organize procedures? Use brief examples to describe what kinds of obstacles existed in your work and how you overcame them.

- **Include how much and how many.** Did you start new projects? How many? Did you save your company money or time? How much? Use percentages and numbers when you can.

- **Showcase your role.** Did you work on your own? As part of a team? In a supervisory capacity? As a team leader? As an inspector or trainer? Were you promoted while working on a project? Explain your role.

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION

In addition to the USAJOBS website, there are several other valuable sources of information on applying for federal employment.

1. It is a good idea to check out the **website for the agency** (e.g., IRS, Air Force, Homeland Security, etc.) for vacancies that interest you. They can give you a lot of detail about their role in serving the public and provide glimpses into the work culture you can expect.

2. The one-stop source of info for **separating military members and veterans seeking civilian employment** is at: **http://www.fedshirevets.gov**

3. For more tips on writing an **effective federal resume**, read about *Resume and Application Tips* at: **www.usajobs.gov/Help/faq/application/documents/resume/what-to-include/**

4. See the Hill AFB video about applying on USAJOBS: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8BicxsWEY6c**

5. If you have specific questions about applying for federal employment, email your question to: **Hill.AFB.Outreach@us.af.mil**

6. The **Utah Department of Workforce Services (DWS)** has advisors, workshops, info sessions and on-line information to assist job seekers in finding employment. **http://jobs.utah.gov**

7. There are many **Air Reserve Technician (ART) positions** at Hill AFB. To learn more about these job opportunities, go to: **www.afrc.af.mil/AboutUs/JobOpportunities.aspx**