



CAREER VISION

A Primer on Applying for Federal Government Jobs

Which U.S. employer has over 2 million workers in more than 350 occupations and still needs more talent? The federal government of the United States. From the chemists in the U.S. Treasury Department's Bureau of Engraving and Printing who produce watermarks on paper currency resilient enough to last a lifetime, to kennel managers and dog mushers who work for the Alaska National Park, the government has opportunities for people from all types of backgrounds and experiences.

So, whether you are a mid-careerist seeking a change or recent college graduate looking for your first full-time position, why not investigate the opportunities the federal government offers? But, before you press the "submit" button on your online application, be mindful of these important lessons from your grammar school days.

Lesson #1: Follow the Rules!

Even though job openings in the federal government may be plentiful, you need to understand that the hiring process is vastly different from corporate employment practices. For instance:

- The application process for federal jobs must be followed *completely* and *accurately*. So be certain to color inside the lines! Candidates who fail to follow *all* instructions won't advance to the next step of the multi-layered federal hiring process. (*For more information:* [Understanding the Federal Hiring Process](#); [How Does the Application Process Work?](#))
- Federal resumes must follow a particular format and are more detailed than typical resumes. Therefore, while resumes for entry-level positions in the corporate world are usually one page in length, federal resumes typically require more information including job titles, salary, employment dates, duties, and accomplishments. Consequently, resumes for federal jobs are often several pages long. (*For more information:* [How to Write a Federal Resume.](#))
- As part of the application process, candidates may be required to provide written responses to questionnaires and short essay questions related to the knowledge, skills, and abilities ("KSAs") required for a specific position, as described in the job opportunity announcement. You'll need to provide real-life examples to describe



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how you've used your KSAs to solve challenging problems in the workplace. (*For more information:* [The Importance of KSAs in the Federal Application Process.](#))

Lesson #2: Do Your Homework

Taking Lesson 1 into account, you may be thinking that getting a public sector job takes a lot of work — *and you're right!* The process can be a bit challenging and time consuming. However, if you do your homework to understand the intricacies of the federal hiring process, you'll save yourself a lot of time and energy in the long run. Do you need a "study guide"? Then check out [Go Government](#). This website provides useful tips for completing your application and lots of helpful information about the government's interviewing and selection process.

Lesson #3: Go to the Library

Now that you've finished your homework, you're ready to look for job openings. It's important to be aware that *every federal agency is required to list their vacancies publicly*. Most of them do so on [USAJOBS.gov](#), so start your search using this virtual library. Yet, some government entities choose *not* to post their job opportunity announcements on USAJOBS, but on their own websites instead. So be sure to check those as well. Go to the [Federal Government Directory](#) for a list of federal agencies and links to their websites.

Lesson #4: Keep Track of Your Grades

As you apply for federal vacancies online, you can set your preferences in [USAJOBS.gov](#) to receive automated email notifications regarding your application status. This feature allows you to keep track of your application as it passes through each phase of the hiring process. (*For more information:* [How to See Your Application Status.](#))

Lesson #5: Wait Your Turn

While federal agencies look to fill most vacancies within 90 days of posting the job opportunity announcement, the hiring process can take six months or longer. Be patient and you may just get a "gold star" – a new job!