

# Federal Employment

## Q&A

- **How do I apply for Federal employment?**

There must be a job opportunity announcement (JOA) in order to apply for a Federal job. A Federal application consists of submitting a resume, usually completing an assessment and may require additional information such as: transcripts, SF-50s from government employees and/or DD 214.

Here are some general guidelines to keep in mind while applying for jobs:

1. Find a job opportunity announcement that matches your skills and interests by using the search jobs function (<http://jobsearch.usajobs.gov/>).

- Search by occupation, agency name, location, announcement number
- Click Search for Jobs

2. After finding a job of interest, it is very important that you carefully review the "Qualifications and Evaluations" section of the job opportunity announcement to see if you qualify for the job.

3. After you carefully review the "Qualifications and Evaluations" section, review the "How to Apply" section of the job opportunity announcement.

When applicants do not follow the instructions provided in the "How to Apply" section of the job opportunity announcement, the application will be considered incomplete and they are not considered for the job.

4. After following these initial steps, you are now ready to apply for a Federal government job.

Additional Information:

When you apply for a position, we recommend that you print out the job opportunity announcement, so that you will have the information to refer to when checking on your status after the closing date. When an agency's job opportunity announcement is closed, it is removed from USAJOBS®. We do not provide copies of closed job opportunity announcements. You can also save the job opportunity announcement as an HTML Web page. To save, you must view the job opportunity announcement on your screen. Then, go to "File", "Save As", select "Web Page, complete" and click "Save".

You can also log into "My Account" and create a "Saved Search" that will notify you by email when jobs meeting your qualifications have been added to the system.

For more information, visit <http://www.usajobs.gov/firsttimevisitors.asp> to learn about Employment Information, Federal Hiring Processes, and how to assess your skills and interests to match potential career opportunities.

- **How do I find a job?**

Searching for job opportunities on USAJOBS® is very easy. To search for jobs, select “Search Jobs” from the USAJOBS home page or go to <http://jobsearch.usajobs.gov> At the job search page, you can:

- 1) Search Jobs by "Location", "Job Category", "Salary range", "Pay Grade", and/or 'Search Keyword'; or
- 2) Select a more refined search from the specialty search options at the top of the page including "Agency", "Series", "Senior Executive" or "Advanced".

If you are looking for a particular position, use the "Keyword Search" box to indicate the specific position or location of interest. Additional tips for keyword searching can be found at:

[http://jobsearch.usajobs.gov/help/index.asp?ma=keyword\\_tips](http://jobsearch.usajobs.gov/help/index.asp?ma=keyword_tips)

- **What does it mean when the vacancy announcement's Who May Apply section says "all sources" or "status applicants" and/or "reinstatement eligibles"?**

These are groups of individuals the agency may identify as groups from which it will accept applications to compete for its vacancy. When a vacancy is open to “all sources”, it means anyone may apply. While there are no restrictions on the groups of candidates who may apply to these types of announcements, in most cases, U.S. citizenship is required. In rare cases, agencies may hire certain non-citizens when there are no qualified U.S. citizens available, unless the appointment is prohibited by statute. In addition, Congress frequently restricts agencies’ ability to hire non-citizens into the excepted service as well, through appropriations provisions.

“Status applicants” refers to those individuals who are current or former Federal civilian employees who hold or held non-temporary appointments in the competitive service, not the excepted service.

**NOTE: Certain veterans eligible under the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA) may also apply and be considered under vacancy announcements limited to status candidates. For information on VEOA eligibility, please visit:**

[http://www.opm.gov/veterans/html/vetguide.asp#Veterans\\_Employment\\_Opportunities\\_Act\\_of\\_1998](http://www.opm.gov/veterans/html/vetguide.asp#Veterans_Employment_Opportunities_Act_of_1998).

Reinstatement eligibility refers to the ability for those individuals who previously held a career or career-conditional appointment to apply for jobs in the competitive Federal service open to status applicants. There is no time limit on reinstatement eligibility for those who either have veterans' preference, or acquired career tenure by completing 3 years of substantially continuous creditable service.

- **Is there an age limit for Federal employment?**

Generally, applicants for most Federal jobs must be (1) at least 18 years old, or (2) at least 16 years old and:

- Have graduated from high school or been awarded a certificate equivalent to graduating from high school; or
- Have completed a formal vocational training program; or
- Have received a statement from school authorities agreeing with their preference for employment rather than

continuing their education; or

- Be currently enrolled in a secondary school and either work only during school vacation periods or work part-time during the school year under a formal student employment program.

Some positions, like those in law enforcement have a maximum entry age and the age may vary from agency to agency but generally falls within the range 34 yrs to 37 yrs. Please review the job opportunity announcement or call the agency directly to find out specific information about the job of interest to you. What does status candidate means?

- **Who do I contact about a job announcement?**

If you have questions regarding a position to which you are applying or to find out the status of your application, please speak to the point-of-contact listed for each job opportunity announcement (JOA). The contact information can be found at the lower portion of the JOA and also on the floating menu located on the right hand side. If the JOA has closed and no longer appears on the USAJOBS® website, you can contact the human resources office of the hiring agency for additional information and assistance.

If you are looking for a way to contact the agency headquarters, please visit

[http://www.usa.gov/Agencies/Federal/All\\_Agencies/index.shtml](http://www.usa.gov/Agencies/Federal/All_Agencies/index.shtml).

- **What does GS, WS, WG, etc. mean in a position's title?**

Positions within the Federal Government are classified by occupational series, grade or pay level, and pay plan. Pay plans identify the pay system under which the position is covered. Many white-collar employees are paid under the General Schedule (GS), which is regulated by title 5 and administered by OPM. GS positions, including other white-collar positions, are paid annual salaries. Blue-collar employees are paid under the Federal Wage System (FWS). FWS positions are craft, trade, and laboring positions and include several different pay plans (WS, WG, etc.). FWS positions are paid on an hourly basis.

- **Why have I not heard anything back after applying? How long does it take to hear from an agency after I have applied?**

The Office of Management and Budget has mandated that agencies are responsible for evaluating and providing status to applicants at four points which are:

- Application Received
- Application Assessed
- Applicant Referred or Not Referred to Selection Official
- Applicant Selected or Not Selected

Although each agency is different, generally, you will hear from the hiring agency in about 15-30 days after the job opportunity announcement (JOA) closes. If you have not heard from the agency, you should contact the agency that posted the JOA to inquire about the status of your application. You may also go to "My Account" to view your application history.

The contact information for each announcement is listed in the lower portion of the JOA and also on the floating menu on the right hand side of the JOA. If the JOA has closed and no longer appears on the USAJOBS® website, you can contact the human resources office of the hiring agency for additional information and assistance.

- **What are qualification standards?**

Qualification Standards are a description of the minimum requirements necessary to perform work of a particular occupation successfully and safely. These minimum requirements may include specific job-related work experience, education medical or physical standards, training, security, and/or licensure. They are not designed to rank candidates, identify the best qualified for a particular position, or substitute for an analysis of an applicant's knowledge, skills, and abilities/competencies.

- **What does “area of consideration” mean?**

The area of consideration describes the individuals from whom the agency will accept applications to compete for the position. It may be a broad or a limited group of individuals. The area of consideration may also be referred to as “Who May Apply” within the vacancy announcement. If you are not within the area of consideration and you are not eligible for a non-competitive or special hiring authority, the agency will not consider your application.

- **How does the Federal pay system work?**

For white-collar employees, basic pay is usually set under the General Schedule (GS), which is adjusted annually. Employees in GS positions in the continental United States also receive locality pay (there are 32 defined locality pay areas). Employees outside the continental United States in non-foreign areas (i.e., Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands) do not receive locality rates, but rather receive cost-of-living allowances. Vacancy announcements include pay ranges for the advertised positions.

For blue-collar employees, basic pay is set under the Federal Wage System (FWS). There are 132 appropriated fund and 125 non-appropriated fund local wage areas.

White-collar and blue-collar employees in certain occupations and/or geographic areas may receive special rates. Special rates are higher rates of pay than GS and locality rates.

Some agencies have statutory authority to administer their own pay systems. Employees in these agencies are compensated through alternative pay systems established by their employing agency.

- **Can OPM review my resume/application to determine for which positions I am qualified?**

OPM has delegated most of its examining authority for competitive service positions to agencies. This authority includes making qualification determinations for agency jobs. The hiring agency evaluates your

application against OPM-issued minimum qualification requirements (e.g., related work experience, education, licensure, if required) to determine your eligibility for the advertised position.

- **Do I have to be a US citizen to apply?**

Under Executive Order 11935, only United States citizens and nationals may be appointed to competitive service Federal jobs. In rare cases, agencies may hire certain non-citizens when there are no qualified U.S. citizens available, unless the appointment is prohibited by statute. In addition, Congress frequently restricts agencies' ability to hire non-citizens into the excepted service as well, through appropriations provisions.

- **If I am found to be qualified, will I get an interview?**

Agencies develop their own procedures for interview practices. The decision to interview may depend on a variety of factors, including your ranking against other candidates, the number of positions being filled, and the number of people who applied.

- **How long will it take before I hear my results?**

The time it takes to be contacted to schedule an interview or to be notified of non-selection for a position may vary. Agencies have a 45-day timeline goal for hiring and OPM has developed a 45-day hiring model to increase efficiency in the hiring process. The model focuses on a series of recommended steps from the date the vacancy announcement closes until the time an offer is made to a candidate. OPM holds agencies accountable for the degree to which they achieve the 45-day goal, but the goal is not legally binding upon the agency and confers no particular rights on applicants. It is recommended you maintain the vacancy point-of-contact information so you can obtain the status of your application and the position for which you applied.

- **For which positions may I apply?**

If you have no prior Federal civilian service and are not eligible for any special appointing authority, you may only be considered for announcements which are open to the public or all sources or U.S. citizens. If you meet the criteria for a special appointing authority, you may apply under that authority as well; however, you may have to submit separate applications if you wish to be considered under more than one appointment authority. Each vacancy announcement will include qualification criteria outlining the minimum education or experience requirements an applicant must possess to be considered qualified. Follow the instructions provided in the "How to Apply" section of each vacancy announcement. You will be competing against other applicants based on the information provided in your application and job-specific question responses; therefore, you must ensure you provide a complete and accurate explanation of your experience and qualifications.

- **Does veterans' preference apply in the selection process for students?**

Pursuant to 5 CFR § 302.101(c)(8)), each agency is required to follow the principle of veterans' preference as far as administratively feasible and, on the request of a qualified and available preference eligible, to furnish him or her with the reasons for his or her non-selection.

- **How can I find out for which positions I am qualified?**

Vacancy announcements will include the qualification requirements, such as education and/or experience, license requirements, etc. You should review the vacancy announcement to determine whether you meet the requirements for the position

- **How does USAJOBS work?**

Federal agencies are responsible for posting job vacancy announcements on the USAJOBS Website. Vacancy announcements for agency positions are posted for a specific period of time and indicate a closing date. Application procedures and application time periods differ based on agency practices; it is important to review application information included in the announcement for each position in which you are interested.

- **What is a vacancy announcement?**

Federal vacancy announcements are the means by which an agency advertises its vacancies. Job vacancy announcements describe position information including the title, salary, duties, qualification requirements, closing date, and application procedures. There is no universal format for vacancy announcements: each agency creates and manages announcements independently, so you should carefully review each section. Announcements are removed from the USAJOBS Website on the closing date; therefore, you are encouraged to maintain for future reference a copy of announcements to which you apply.

- **What is a closing date?**

The closing date is the last day you can apply for the job. The vacancy announcement will specify the acceptance period for electronic submissions or, if a hard copy is required, whether or not your application should be either received or postmarked by the closing date.

- **Where can I find information about Federal jobs?**

USAJOBS is the official job site of the United States Federal Government. This Website, [www.usajobs.gov](http://www.usajobs.gov), is the centralized site for most Federal agencies to post vacancy announcements. At any given time, there are approximately 20,000 positions posted on the site. Additionally, many agencies also advertise in newspapers of general circulation, participate in job fairs, and recruit on school campuses.