

**Federal Applications, usajobs.gov:  
TIPS on Searching, Resume and Questionnaires**

*Thanks to Paula Swingley, CFANS alum and National Park Service (NPS) professional, 11.26.18*

**Tips for Searching for Openings**

- It is frequently less competitive (easier) to be hired through a [hiring path or "authority"](#) that is not "Open to the Public". So, on usajobs.gov, be sure to select all of the "hiring paths" for which you are eligible (such as student, recent graduate (within 2 years), veteran, Native American, individual with disabilities, etc). For instance, students who apply through the hiring path for students, the Pathways Program for Students, compete only against students instead of against all U.S. citizens.

(Pathways jobs for Recent Graduates tend to have the opportunity for 'conversion to permanent job status'. Some Current Student Internships may have the possibility for conversion too - read the announcement carefully).

- Filters are friends. Use them on usajobs:

- "Students" will show you only jobs that include the Pathways hiring authority.
- "Pay Grade" (general scale or GS)
  - GS-03: Completion of 1 full academic year of post-high school study.
  - GS-04: Completion of 2 full academic years of post-high school study or an associate's degree.
  - GS-05(-07): Completion of 4 academic years of post-high school leading to a bachelor's degree or equivalent degree.
  - GS-09: Master's degree or 2 years of full-time graduate study
  - GS-11: Ph.D. or equivalent doctorate or advanced law degree
  - These are broad generalizations and you will need to read the requirements of each job announcement carefully as many include the option to combine education and work experience.
- "Series" are the way the Federal Government categorizes occupations into families of similar occupations. For instance, "Natural Resources Mgmt and Biological Sciences" jobs are the 400 series; "Physical Sciences" (food, forestry products, hydrology) jobs are series 1300. [Searching by series](#) may help you find a job that is a perfect match for the degree you are working toward or received. Don't limit yourself to one series though – your degree may prepare you for jobs in multiple series.
- Save searches and have them emailed to you daily since some jobs open and close within 5 days. Also, beware of applicant caps (accepting only the first 50 job applications); the position will be closed at the end of the day on which the 50<sup>th</sup> application was submitted.
- Be ready to apply for jobs as soon as they are posted: create an account and have your federal resume and transcripts ready so you don't have to scramble.
- Jobs close at Eastern Time; do not save applying for the last hour.
- Jobs with multiple vacancies will likely give you better odds.

**Tips for Resumes and Questionnaires**

- In usajobs.gov, you have the option of submitting your existing resume or building one within usajobs.gov. It's recommended that you build it in usajobs.gov, especially if you are new to federal hiring. The program essentially guides you through including all of the necessary

information (start date, end date, hours worked, etc.). However, you are not required to use usajobs and if you wish to upload your current resume/CV you could still successfully compete for a job so long as include all of the required information (ex. start and end dates, hours worked, comprehensive job description, etc).

- There is no page limit or harm in including everything you've ever done. Include descriptions and detail.
- You can have multiple resumes within usajobs.gov. Take advantage of this option especially if you are interested in multiple types of jobs.
- Unofficial transcripts during the application process are okay; you do not need to submit an "official" transcript with your application materials.
- Do not include photographs, birth dates, social security numbers. Make sure to block out that information if it is included on some document you wish to include in your application package (ex. birth date on unofficial transcript).
- A questionnaire is part of the application and you will have the opportunity to preview it before submitting your application materials. You need to be confident when answering the questionnaire. You are essentially self-scoring yourself. If you are struggling to answer these questions, please reach out to a career counselor or a current or former federal employee.
- Tailor your resume to the questionnaire items. Your resume must support as clearly as possible the responses you chose on the questionnaire.
- Start to articulate accomplishments more than duties. Utilize career counseling professionals available to you (usually for free) through your college or university. They can help turn that bullet list of task/duties you did into a compelling description that makes you really standout to a hiring official (accomplishments). For example:
  - "Rented out fishing equipment" is a weak skills statement.
  - A much stronger skills statement is: "Renting out fishing equipment daily to 2-10 park visitors at the park visitor center from May to September using an automated check-out system without direct supervision. Provided an orientation to fishing patrons including information about the park, popular and less popular fishing locations, park resources including tips on environmental stewardship, safety information and local fishing policies and laws."

### **Finally**

- Federal jobs tend to be highly competitive. Most people find it takes a lot of persistence and a little luck to secure their first federal job. Keep at it!
- If you believe you are qualified for a job that you did not get referred for, you can contact the agency contact for clarification. Everyone makes mistakes. Contact information is listed at the end of every job announcement; you can see the full job announcement for every job you have submitted an application for if you click, on usajobs.gov, open the information about the job.
- Practice interviewing. Utilize career counseling professionals available to you through your college or university.