

# Guide to Internships, Fellowships, Apprenticeships, and Other Programs



Guidance on Promoting Internships and  
Other Student and Early Career Programs  
In the Federal Government

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# I. Introduction and Background

## Introduction

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is committed to revitalizing internship programs to build diverse talent sources needed to sustain the Federal workforce of today and the future. As President Biden stated in Executive Order 14035, “the Federal Government must strengthen its ability to recruit, hire, develop, promote, and retain our Nation's talent and remove barriers to equal opportunity.”<sup>1</sup>

OPM is partnering with Federal agencies to ensure internships, fellowships, apprenticeships, and other programs are an integrated part of their strategic workforce planning to achieve a talented workforce drawn from all segments of society. This effort also requires an investment from agencies in learning and development, mentoring, and career advancement opportunities for the individuals who are brought into these programs.

## Purpose

The purpose of the Guide to Internships, Fellowships, Apprenticeships, and Other Programs (Guide) is to provide guidance to hiring managers, human resources (HR) professionals, internship coordinators, Pathways Programs Officers (PPOs), and other agency<sup>2</sup> employees who are responsible for the administration of these programs. It serves as a reference for agencies to use in conjunction with Executive Order (E.O.) 13562, E.O. 14035, applicable laws and regulations, OPM’s Pathways Programs guidance, agencies’ Pathways Memoranda of Understanding, and agency policies. Please consult with your agency PPO, HR professional, General Counsel’s office, or OPM at [recruitment@opm.gov](mailto:recruitment@opm.gov) for additional information.

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<sup>1</sup> [Executive Order 14035](#) of June 25, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> “Agency,” as used in this Guide, is an all-encompassing term that refers to any department, component, or independent establishment of the Federal government.

## Background

On June 25, 2021, the President issued [Executive Order \(EO\) 14035: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility \(DEIA\) in the Federal Workforce](#). As the Nation's largest employer, the Federal Government seeks to be a model for DEIA, where all employees are treated with dignity and respect. We are at our best when drawing upon all parts of society, and our greatest accomplishments are achieved when diverse perspectives are brought to bear to overcome our greatest challenges. E.O. 14035, Section 6, directs agencies to increase the availability of paid internships, fellowships, and apprenticeships, and reduce the practice of hiring interns, fellows, and apprentices who are unpaid.

[Executive Order 13562](#), "Recruiting and Hiring Students and Recent Graduates," issued in 2010, established the Pathways Internship and Recent Graduates Programs, and enhanced the Presidential Management Fellows Program. As that E.O. recognized, the Federal government benefits from a diverse workforce that includes students and recent graduates, who infuse the workplace with their enthusiasm, talent, and fresh perspectives.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### *Office of Personnel Management (OPM)*

OPM prescribes regulations and has a critical oversight role to ensure that agencies comply with the President's direction to follow merit systems principles, apply veterans' preference, and use these internship programs as a supplement to, rather than a substitute for, the competitive hiring process. As part of this oversight role, OPM's Director may establish caps on the number of Pathways participants who may be appointed or converted in any Pathways Program within a specific agency or throughout the Federal government, as provided in the regulations.

### *Agencies*

Agencies must integrate internships, fellowships, apprenticeships, and other hiring programs into their strategic workforce planning efforts.

## **II. General Information**

### **Agency Workforce Planning**

Workforce planning, the systematic process of identifying and addressing the gaps between the workforce of today and the human capital needs of tomorrow, is an important prerequisite to filling positions through the Internship Programs.

Internships are an effective means of enhancing or sustaining workforce diversity, building entry-level talent pipelines, and supporting succession plans. Agencies should ensure their workforce plans include permanent positions or full-time equivalents to allow for the possibility of conversion of individuals who successfully complete program requirements.

OPM expects agencies to use internships, fellowships, and apprenticeships as part of an overall workforce planning strategy, and not as a substitute for competitive hiring.

Agencies may hire students for term-limited appointments. This flexibility provides supervisors with an opportunity to evaluate interns and determine their fit before hiring them into permanent positions.

### **Assessment**

Agencies are required to use validated (i.e., job-related) assessment tools when examining applicants for positions covered by Schedule D, Pathways Programs. OPM promotes the use of assessments to improve talent acquisition strategies by using skills-based hiring practices. The use of effective assessments addresses barriers to recruiting and hiring the talent agencies need to perform mission critical work and improves the quality and diversity of hires. Additionally, the use of effective assessments in the hiring process provides human resources (HR) professionals and hiring managers the tools and resources needed to support their recruiting and hiring efforts and increase hiring manager satisfaction with the quality of applicants. This requires the collaboration between HR and hiring managers to develop and design effective assessment strategies to hire the talent needed to perform the work.

Assessments tools are effective for determining if applicants possess knowledge, skills, abilities (KSAs)/competencies based on their work, education, and/or training

experiences. Applicants must be assessed appropriately using a passing grade assessment to demonstrate their KSAs/competencies for positions ([Delegated Examining Operations Handbook, Chapter 5](#)). Agencies' assessment of applicants may not rely solely on a self-assessment of KSAs/competencies. Applicants should be assessed to determine the quality of their KSAs/competencies aligned with the position as demonstrated by their experience, education, or training. OPM guidance on Federal Skills Hiring includes the [Modernization and Reforming the Assessment and Hiring of Federal Job Candidates](#) to improve hiring by using assessments. These reforms will expand the use of competency-based hiring across the Federal Government with the increased use of valid assessments that carefully measure candidates' ability to perform the job. Skills-based hiring helps hiring managers focus on what candidates know how to do, not where they learned it. It values all relevant skills for the role at hand, whether they are learned in the classroom, on the job, or on one's own, and supporting strategic hiring goals for early career talent.

Assessment tools include, but are not limited to, cognitive ability tests, work samples, situational judgment tests, job knowledge tests, and structured interviews. [OPM's Assessment and Selection](#) webpage contains multiple competency-based assessment options and the [Assessment Decision Guide](#) that agencies can use to make assessment decisions.

Agencies should standardize and document the assessment process through the following steps:

- Treat all individuals consistently. This is most easily accomplished by adopting a standardized assessment and decision-making process. "Standardizing" means making a process uniform to ensure the same information is collected on each individual and is used in a consistent manner in employment decisions.
- Ensure the selection tool is based on an up-to-date job analysis and is supported by strong validity evidence. A validation study can verify that applicants who score well on the selection device are more likely to do well on the job and contribute to organizational success. Agencies not familiar with validation research methodology are encouraged to consult a measurement expert.

Agencies may use external resources for assessing talent including vendor support and the use of off-the-shelf or customized assessments to meet their hiring needs.

USA Hire is an OPM program that offers agencies the capability to deliver innovative and professionally designed, online assessment solutions. USA Hire offers agencies standard and customized assessment options for assessing applicants for Pathways Program Internship positions. USA Hire Standard Assessment Battery for Pathways Internships covers any Student Trainee position and is comprised of an avatar-based Occupational Judgment Assessment, a computer adaptive Occupational Reading Assessment, and an Occupational Interaction Assessment.

For additional information, go to the USA Hire webpage at [opm.gov/services-for-agencies/assessment-evaluation/usa-hire/](https://opm.gov/services-for-agencies/assessment-evaluation/usa-hire/), or contact [USAHIRE@opm.gov](mailto:USAHIRE@opm.gov).

## **Benefits**

Individuals hired under an Internship or Fellowship program for a period expected to last longer than one year are eligible for health and life insurance coverage, so long as they are also expected to be in a pay status for at least one-third of the total period of time from the date of their initial appointment to the date of completion of their program. The cost of premiums is split between the employee and the agency, as is the case for all permanent employees.

When an employee on a temporary appointment, a seasonal schedule of less than six months per year, or an intermittent schedule is expected to work 130 hours per month or more for at least 90 days, the employee is eligible to enroll in an FEHB plan and receive the same government contribution as full-time permanent employees. These newly eligible employees will receive the same government contribution as full-time permanent employees. Please consult with your agency Benefits Officer for more information about benefits eligibility.



## **Federal Student Loan Repayment Assistance**

Agencies may offer Federal student loan repayment assistance as an incentive to recruit or retain highly skilled students, and to fill mission-critical and hard-to-fill positions. In offering this incentive, agencies should consider factors such as the value of the incentive to their organizations and pay parity.

## **Telework**

Internship and Fellowship participants may be eligible to telework depending upon agency policy and individual circumstances. Agencies should follow their agency-specific telework policy.

## **Program Experience**

It is essential for the success of your Internship, Fellowship, or Apprenticeship Program that you consider the following:

- Foster a culture of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. Engage your new hires in building a strong, diverse workplace and create feedback mechanisms for communication between employees and leadership.
- Demonstrate the importance of learning and development by providing time, support, and resources for employees and hiring managers to participate in learning and development activities.
- Utilize the full range of development options including low-cost or no-cost options such as rotations, lessons learned sessions, brown bag lunches, and on-the-job learning opportunities.
- Encourage interns, fellows, and apprentices to work with their supervisors to enhance their learning and growth by approving their participation in training courses, as resources allow.
- Share information about your agency employee resource groups and provide opportunities for participation, if they wish to do so.

## **Onboarding and Orientation**

Onboarding and orientation are terms that are often used interchangeably, though they have different goals and outcomes. Onboarding is the process of welcoming and acclimating new employees into an organization, and providing them with the knowledge, tools, and resources that they need to be successful and productive. It is a broader, longer-term process that helps new employees to transition smoothly and become engaged members of an agency, while orientation prepares them for their first days of work. Onboarding starts before the employee begins and often lasts through the first year of employment. The effectiveness of an onboarding program may not only impact employees' ability to successfully transition into an agency but may also impact the agency's ability to retain talent.

Orientation is an important part of a new employee's experience. In addition to helping employees learn about the benefits associated with their appointments and ensuring they complete various forms; orientation is an opportunity for new employees to become familiar with key agency points of contact for questions that will arise during their tenures.

## **Individual Development Plans (IDP)**

The IDP is a formal plan, developed jointly by the supervisor and employee. It is a strategic roadmap that employees can use to create and track their career planning, professional development, and training activities. It should make note of the employee's target position, learning objectives, and developmental requirements.

Internship, Fellowship, or Apprenticeship Programs provide structured training to ensure a meaningful developmental experience for participants. OPM recommends that employees appointed for longer than 90 days be placed on an IDP.

## **Mentors**

Agencies are encouraged to assign mentors to interns and fellows whose appointments are expected to last longer than 120 days. A mentor should be someone at the employee's agency outside of their chain of supervisors.

The mentors should serve as coaches and trusted colleagues, not as supervisors. A mentoring process affords interns and fellows with professional development and guidance and capitalizes on the experiences of seasoned employees who are committed to developing a highly skilled and high performing workforce. They help employees with direction in their careers by providing them with an opportunity to benefit from their mentors' knowledge, talents, and guidance.

## **Work Schedules**

Participants in Internships and Fellowship programs may work either part- or full-time schedules. Supervisors are responsible for establishing work schedules with participants in accordance with [5 CFR 610.121](#). Supervisors and participants should agree on a work schedule that does not interfere with the participant's academic schedule or performance, and that allows for completion of both their academic and program requirements in a reasonable timeframe.

## **Awards**

Awards are an excellent way to acknowledge employee contributions and to encourage employees to excel in their jobs. As agency employees, participants in internship and fellowship programs may be eligible to receive awards for their work. Agencies should consider the range of options available for awarding and acknowledging eligible employees, including performance awards, on-the-spot awards, special acts, time off, and more.

## **Separations**

Separations are actions that end employment with agencies. The most common forms of separations of interns and fellows are resignations and terminations.

### ***Resignations***

Program participants may resign at any time. When doing so, they should submit a resignation letter that states the effective date of resignation, and provides both forwarding contact information (e.g., address, phone number and email) and, if desired, a reason for resignation.

### ***Terminations***

Agencies may terminate participants for misconduct, poor performance or because they have been determined to be unsuitable under the applicable provisions of title 5 of the United States Code and the Code of Federal Regulations.

It is important to consult with your Employee Relations (ER) Office or Labor Relations (LR) Office that has responsibility for evaluating terminations and ensuring compliance with Federal regulations and agency-specific policies.

### III. Recruitment And Outreach

#### Outreach

E.O. 14035 directs agencies to build a more diverse pipeline into public service through new recruitment partnerships. OPM is partnering with agencies and key stakeholders to continue to improve the way the Federal government recruits, hires, and retains new talent. Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Minority Serving Institutions, and women's colleges are engines of opportunity and innovation in our Nation.

Agencies should develop agency or bureau/component outreach and recruitment plans with appropriate resources to enable them to reach underserved communities, as part of a comprehensive recruitment program. Some effective strategies include the following:

- Create or expand partnerships, as appropriate and permissible, with Minority Serving Institutions (MSI): Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Native American serving/nontribal institutions, Asian American and Pacific Islander-serving institutions, Alaska Native-serving and Native Hawaiian-serving institutions, community colleges, technical schools, and community-based organizations dedicated to serving and working with underserved communities.
- Expand partnerships, as appropriate and permissible, with four-year colleges and universities, professional, technical, vocational, and trade schools, and community colleges to broaden recruitment efforts and attract applicants in mission critical occupations, including Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). Include other academic institutions with diverse student bodies.
- Designate individuals and/or a committee to work with deans and career placement offices in planning and implementing recruitment strategies for early career talent. Recruiters and hiring managers should build and strengthen

relationships with deans, faculty, alumni, and especially with career placement officers, educating them on the agency's mission critical jobs, the Federal hiring process, special hiring programs, and any incentives the agency can offer to attract the best talent.

- Conduct outreach to stakeholders in the public, private, nonprofit, and academic sectors to help address critical workforce challenges and opportunities such as diversity, critical skills gaps, helping the long-term unemployed, formerly incarcerated, and veterans' hiring.

Agencies should establish collaborative relationships, as appropriate under their existing authorities, with organizations and offices that serve specific communities such as students and individuals with disabilities, career services centers, workforce centers, and veterans' service organizations. Effective outreach activities include:

- Engaging affinity groups and student organizations on campus through scholarships, grants, experiential education programs, ambassador programs, student employment speaking engagements or guest lectures (e.g., events, classes, workshops).
- Working with faculty from universities and community colleges to conduct curriculum reviews and identify necessary coursework for mission-critical occupations.

### ***Incorporate Video Content for Outreach to Students and Recent Graduates***

Create short videos tailored to your audiences that pitch Federal service or the agency's mission and careers.

### ***Social Media as an Outreach Tool***

- Develop a social media outreach plan in partnership with your agency/component Office of Communication. The social media platforms used should be those with appropriate terms of service for the Federal Government.
- Connect with early career audiences on a more personal level – target messages and keep the information timely and relevant, share positive testimonials from alumni, highlight agency recruiting events, etc.

## **Recruitment**

Recruiting is an on-going process. To become more competitive and attract students, recent graduates, and other individuals with the right skills, agencies must develop an effective brand, build talent pipelines, and establish and maintain partnerships to successfully secure diverse talent. Ensure that your agency/component/bureau's recruitment plans include targeting talent from diverse academic institutions – professional, technical, vocational, and trade schools – particularly MSIs and institutions with diverse student bodies.

### ***Branding and Marketing***

Agencies may consider developing an agency “brand” that advances the Federal government as a model employer, supports DEIA values, and builds credibility with applicants. Generally, the brand showcases the agency mission and careers. Large agencies may have an agency brand in addition to brands for bureaus/components. Recruitment materials and career pages on your website should reflect the agency's branding to attract diverse talent and highlight the benefits of working for the Federal government. Effective practices include:

- Producing videos of agency employees to provide a realistic preview for advertised positions.
- Marketing comprehensive compensation and benefits package, workplace flexibilities such as telework, remote work, and flexible and compressed work schedules.
- Highlighting learning and development opportunities in your communications with early career talent.
- Strategically utilizing available recruitment flexibilities such as recruitment and relocation incentives and loan repayment programs to attract new hires.

### ***Sourcing***

Agencies should attract and engage with diverse applicant pools regularly, not just when the jobs are posted. Talent sourcing is the process of searching for qualified individuals for the positions you plan to fill immediately and in the future. In building

your talent pipeline, agencies should develop a strategy that seeks the right candidates for the positions. Effective practices include:

- Partnering with the hiring manager during the recruiting process.
- Using professional association websites, commercial websites, journals, and other publications reaching a diverse audience to advertise internship opportunities.
- Leveraging opportunities to recruit in the local commuting areas, including attending or hosting job fairs, and conducting campus recruitment. Hiring managers should be involved in the recruiting efforts, especially participating in on-campus visits.
- Using Agency Talent Portal on USAJOBS to reach active job seekers for specialized needs and special hiring authorities such as Schedule A for individuals with disabilities.
- Involving agency Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) to augment the campus recruitment team and inform the agency/component recruitment practices. ERG members could be trained to serve as outreach ambassadors to colleges, universities, organizations, and affinity groups. ERG members usually have good ties to the communities and their participation can enhance the effectiveness of sourcing underrepresented and under-served groups.
- Using applicant flow data to better understand the effectiveness of recruiting.

### ***Social Media***

Consult your agency's social media policy for usage and account guidance and engage with your communications, public relations, or social media team to assist with incorporating social media as a part of your agency/component's overall recruitment strategy.

Agencies should consider expanding the use of appropriate social media, in accordance with agency policy, in strategic recruiting and outreach efforts, including:



- Creating accessible videos highlighting the opportunities in Federal service through the stories of actual employees on the job.
- Using social media to highlight job postings, making the notices of internship opportunities more creative, and incorporating graphics, video, and photos, while maintaining accessibility.
- Developing a social media recruitment toolkit for recruiters and hiring managers and training them to better use social media platforms. Emphasize the use of crisp, engaging language in outreach messages.
- Incorporating social media recruitment as part of the agency's human resources budget to acquire access to social media tracking tools, messaging tools, paid social advertising or promotions, or customer relationship management (CRM) tools.
- Leveraging USAJOBS social media and marketing features to highlight the agency's job opportunities.

### ***Data Analysis***

- Expand the use of applicant flow data and analytics to inform future outreach and recruitment decisions.
- Develop a data story based on post-audit applicant flow data covering the process from application to selection.
- Review recruitment and hiring processes to determine where diverse student applicants come from and where applicants, including those from underrepresented groups, drop out of the process.
- Examine how diverse candidates are represented at each stage of the process. (e.g., application rates, interview success rates, selection rates).

## IV. Pathways Internship Program

### Program Overview

The Pathways Internship Program provides students, who are enrolled in or accepted for enrollment in a wide variety of qualifying educational institutions, with paid opportunities to work either part- or full-time in agencies and explore career paths related to their academic fields of study or career interests. Students who successfully complete the program may be eligible for non-competitive conversion to a term or permanent position in the competitive service.

The flexible nature of the Internship Program allows agencies to fill different gaps by providing opportunities to hire both longer-term, indefinite Interns, as well as temporary Interns (Interns Not-to-Exceed (NTE)).

An Intern is a current student who has been appointed to the Internship Program for an initial period that is expected to last more than one year.

An Intern Not-to-Exceed (NTE) is a current student who has been appointed to the Internship Program for an initial period that is not expected to last more than one year.

The Internship Program appointing authority and implementing regulations can be found in [5 CFR 213.3402\(a\)](#), [5 CFR 302](#) and [5 CFR 362, Subparts A and B](#).

### Program Requirements

#### *Pathways Memorandum of Understanding*

Prior to administering and using the Pathways Programs, an agency must enter into a Pathways Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with OPM that addresses the requirements outlined in [5 CFR 362.104](#). These agreements, which must be renewed every two years, should be submitted to [Pathways@opm.gov](mailto:Pathways@opm.gov).

#### *Pathways Programs Officer*

Each agency must have a Pathways Programs Officer (PPO). The PPO is responsible for Program administration, including coordinating recruitment and onboarding processes, and ensuring that mentors are assigned, as appropriate, and that IDPs are put in place. The PPO also serves as a liaison to OPM by providing OPM with best practices and lessons learned and submitting applicable reports.

## ***Eligibility***

Interns and Interns NTE must:

- Be accepted for enrollment or enrolled and seeking a degree or certificate in a [qualifying educational institution](#) on a half- to full-time basis (as determined by the educational institution);
- Meet the definition of a student throughout the duration of their appointments;
- Meet agency-specific requirements as specified in the agency's Participant Agreement with the Intern; and
- Meet the qualification standards (e.g., series and grade) for their internship positions.

In addition to the Government-wide eligibility requirements noted above, agencies may use requirements such as the ability to work a specified number of hours per week or remain in good academic standing (i.e., maintenance of a minimum grade point average) as eligibility criteria. Agencies may require applicants to confirm their ability to work in the specific location(s) listed in the job announcement. These criteria may be referenced in the agency's Pathways MOU with OPM, the job announcement and/or the Participant Agreement. Agencies may not require the completion of educational requirements for specific coursework for occupations that do not have positive education requirements.

## ***Announcing Pathways Internship Opportunities***

When accepting applications for Internship opportunities from individuals outside of the Federal workforce, agencies must fulfill the public notice requirements outlined in 5 CFR 362.105(b), 5 CFR 362.203(a) and 5 CFR 362.303(a). Public notice may be provided via USAJOBS in the form of a job announcement, or advertisement. An agency may accept applications at a recruitment event but must notify applicants of an alternative means of submitting applications for those applicants unable to attend such an event.

Agencies must “use appropriate merit-based procedures for recruitment, assessment, placement, and ongoing career development for participants in the Pathways Programs.” E.O. 13562, § 7(c). See the Merit System Principles ([mspb.gov/msp/meritsystemsprinciples.htm](https://mspb.gov/msp/meritsystemsprinciples.htm)). Among other things, when posting a job

announcement, advertisement or notice, agencies must consider whether the notice and time allowed provide for fair and open competition that ensures that potential applicants for positions will receive fair and equitable treatment.

Please refer to the [Pathways Program Handbook](#) for more detailed information on announcing Internship Opportunities.

## **Program Administration**

### ***Types of Work***

Interns should be assigned meaningful work that supports agencies' needs and Interns' academic fields of study or career interests. They should not be assigned, as their primary duties, simple administrative or clerical tasks.

Interns NTE should be assigned work that is short-term, of a project-oriented nature or of similarly limited duration. They should primarily be assigned to help complete temporary projects or perform labor-intensive tasks not requiring subject-matter expertise or fill summer jobs.

### ***Academic Fields of Study***

The duties of the position to which an Intern is appointed should be related to their academic field of study or career interests.

### ***Breaks in Program***

A break in program is defined as a period of time in which an Intern or Intern NTE is working, but unable to attend classes, or is neither attending classes nor working.

While breaks in program are not common, they are permissible in certain circumstances (e.g., medical leave, financial hardship, or military service). An agency may use its discretion to either approve or deny a request for a break in program, as well as determine the length of the break.

Agencies should establish a policy that addresses breaks in program, including limitations on breaks, to manage breaks fairly and consistently in program. This policy should also provide guidance regarding the circumstances in which a break in program

may be granted (e.g., maternity leave, illness, emergencies, or other situations outside of the participant's control).

To ensure students continue to make reasonable progress toward completing their academic and program requirements by the established date, as documented in the Participant Agreement, and to support program accountability, the policy may identify limits on the number and length of breaks and provide for a mechanism for approval, as well as tracking and monitoring of breaks.

### ***Position Classification***

Pathways interns whose positions fall under the General Schedule (GS) or a comparable pay system must be classified in the xx99 series of the appropriate occupational group.

Pathways interns whose positions fall under the Federal Wage System (FWS) must be classified in the xx01 series of the appropriate occupational group.

### ***Promotions***

Interns (appointed without an NTE date) may be promoted when an agency has an excepted service policy in place for promotions and when the Interns meet the qualification requirements for the higher-graded positions. Interns NTE are temporary employees and are not eligible for promotions. Please consult your Pathways Programs Officer (PPO) or human resources (HR) professional for further guidance.

### ***Reassignments***

When reassigning an Intern to another Internship position, agencies must follow their own policies for movement of excepted service personnel, and the Interns must meet the qualification requirements for the position to which they will be reassigned.

When reassigning an Intern NTE to another Internship position, agencies must provide minimum public notification (internal to the agency, not on [USAJOBS](#)) so that similarly situated Interns who are also interested in the position can apply to it. If more than one individual is interested in the position, then agencies must apply the selection procedures outlined in [5 CFR 302](#), including the application of veterans' preference and pass over procedures. This applies regardless of whether the position is in a different

job series or in a different series with a career ladder, or whether it is in the same series and grade level as the Internship NTE position. An Intern NTE must meet the qualification requirements for the position to which she or he will be reassigned.

### ***Trial Periods (Pathways Intern)***

The employing agency determines the length of a trial period for a Pathways Intern. Depending on the length of the agency's trial period for employees in the excepted service, the Intern may be eligible for appeal rights during the Internship appointment.

### ***Terminations***

As a condition of employment, an internship appointment expires:

- 120 days after completion of the designated academic course of study, unless the participant is selected for non-competitive conversion under [5 CFR 362.204](#); or
- Upon expiration of the Internship NTE appointment.

A termination based on the expiration of an Internship appointment is not effected under [5 USC Chapter 35](#), [5 USC Chapter 43](#) or [5 USC Chapter 75](#), and the Intern or Intern NTE does not have appeal rights.

If an Intern or Intern NTE's employment is to be terminated at any time prior to the completion of the individual's designated appointment, agencies must determine whether the Intern or Intern NTE may be given appeal rights. In most cases, this determination will be based on whether the Intern or Intern NTE meets the definition of "employee" as set forth in 5 USC 4301 or [5 USC 7511](#), as applicable.

Please refer to the [Pathways Programs Handbook](#) for more detailed information on terminations and contact a representative from your Employee Relations (ER) or Labor Relations (LR) Office.

### ***Tenure Groups for Reduction in Force***

Interns serving under appointments for an initial period expected to last more than one year are classified in Tenure Group II of the excepted service and have the same retention rights as other excepted service employees.

Interns NTE, serving under appointments not to exceed one year, who have completed one year of current, continuous service, are classified in Tenure Group III of the excepted service, and have the same retention rights as other excepted service employees.

Interns NTE, serving under appointments not to exceed one year, who have not completed one year of service, are classified in Tenure Group 0 of the excepted service, and have the same retention rights as other excepted service employees.

## **Selection Process**

### ***Applying Veterans' Preference***

Veterans' preference applies to the selection process for Interns and Interns NTE. Selections must be made in accordance with the requirements in [5 CFR 302](#). Please refer to the Pathways Program Handbook for more information on applying veterans' preference and the selection process.

### ***Passing Over Preference Eligibles***

If seeking to select a non-preference eligible over a preference eligible, agencies must follow the procedures outlined in [5 CFR 332.406\(c\)](#), [5 CFR 302.401\(b\)](#), and the [Delegated Examining Operations Handbook](#) as well as any agency-specific policies.

### ***Qualification Standards***

Qualification standards should be used to evaluate minimum qualifications for the positions and grade levels being filled. To be eligible for Pathways opportunities, applicants must meet the requirements for participation in the program, plus all qualification requirements specified in the qualification standards used by the agency for the specific position, including any positive education requirements and/or selective placement factors, as well as any other designated special qualification requirements.

Agencies may establish agency-specific qualification standards or use the [OPM Qualification Standards](#) for the competitive service in place of the [Group Coverage Qualification Standards for Schedule D, Pathways Internship Positions](#).

For positions that have positive education requirements, agencies may impose educational requirements so long as they relate to the [OPM Qualification Standards](#) for the target positions. These educational requirements should be stated as eligibility requirements, rather than minimum qualification standards. For example, if an agency is filling a Petroleum Engineering Internship position, which upon conversion would require that the Intern had completed specific courses in engineering, then the agency could indicate that only students who have completed or are currently taking some or all of those required courses will be eligible for the Petroleum Engineering Internship position.

For positions that do not have positive education requirements, agencies may not impose educational requirements. Agencies may, however, indicate in the job announcements that they seek or prefer candidates who are pursuing certain degrees or taking specific courses.

### ***Qualifying Educational Institutions***

Interns and Interns NTE must be accepted for enrollment or enrolled and seeking a degree or certificate in a qualifying educational institution on a half- or full-time basis (as determined by the educational institution). Qualifying educational institutions must be recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. They include:

- High schools.
- Technical, vocational and trade schools.
- Two- or four-year colleges or universities.
- Graduate or professional schools; and
- Other qualifying institutions (such as accredited State-certified home-school curricula (high school or college) or awardees of the Harry S. Truman Foundation Scholarship Program).

**Qualifying Educational Institution:** A public high school whose curriculum has been approved by a State or local governing body, a private school that provides secondary education as determined under State law, or a homeschool that is allowed to operate in a State; and any of the following educational institutions or curricula that have been accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the Secretary of Education: a technical



or vocational school, a two- or four-year college or university, a graduate or professional school (e.g., law school or medical school), or a post-secondary homeschool curriculum.

### ***Certificate Programs***

A certificate program is post-secondary education, in a [qualifying educational institution](#), equivalent to at least one academic year of full-time study that is part of an accredited college-level, technical, trade, vocational or business school curriculum.

### ***Employment of Relatives***

As outlined in [5 CFR 362.105\(f\)](#), a Pathways participant may work in the same agency as a relative so long as there is not a direct reporting relationship between them, and provided that the relative is not in a position to influence or control the participant's appointment, employment, promotion, advancement or conversion within the agency.

### ***Citizenship***

Agencies may hire non-U.S. citizens under any of the Pathways Programs provided they meet applicable immigration requirements, and the agency has no budgetary restrictions upon paying a non-citizen for performing the duties of the position. However, participants in the Pathways Programs must be U.S. citizens to be eligible for non-competitive conversion to the competitive service.

### ***Selection and Appointment***

Agencies must apply the provisions in [5 CFR 302](#) when considering, selecting and appointing individuals to positions under the Program. These provisions govern the order of consideration, selection, and appointment of individuals to positions in the excepted service.

## **Appointments**

Appointments to the Internship Program will be made under the Schedule D appointing authority and pursuant to agencies' Pathways MOUs.

Interns and Interns NTE may be appointed to any grade level for which they qualify. The duties of the positions to which Interns are appointed should be related to their academic field of study or career interests.

Pathways appointments are subject to the requirements governing term, career, or career conditional employment. Agencies are responsible, under their specific adjudication guidance, for determining applicant suitability and for verifying qualifications prior to making appointments.

### ***Duration of the Appointment***

Agencies may appoint an Intern for an initial period expected to last more than one year. An internship appointment is not required to have an end date. However, agencies are required to specify an end date for the Internship appointment in the Participant Agreement with the Intern. The end date is generally the Intern's projected graduation date, plus 120 days. The 120-day period cannot be used to finish any remaining academic and/or program requirements.

Agencies may appoint an Intern for an initial period expected to last less than one year. Typically referred to as Interns NTE, these individuals complete work that is short-term, of a project-oriented nature, or of similarly limited duration. Agencies may extend these temporary appointments for various reasons if the Interns NTE continue to meet eligibility requirements.

### ***Participant Agreements***

Agencies must enter into written agreements with each Pathways Intern that they employ. These agreements are typically signed by an HR professional, supervisor, and the participant. Each agreement must include expectations and define the following:

- A general description of the duties to be performed.
- Work schedule.
- Length of the appointment and termination date.
- Mentorship opportunities.
- Training requirements.

- Evaluation procedures.
- Requirements for continuation and successful completion of the Program.
- Minimum eligibility requirements for non-competitive conversion to a term or permanent position in the competitive service; and
- Any other requirements or expectations established by the agency.

Agencies have discretion to tailor Pathways Participant Agreements. While these documents must include certain elements, agencies have the flexibility to incorporate additional components into them (e.g., points of contact at participants' educational institutions).

## **Program Experience**

### ***Performance Management and Evaluation***

Agencies should establish performance goals and evaluation criteria with Interns and Interns NTE. Formal evaluations are required for any appointments lasting 90 days or more. Agencies should complete evaluations annually and hold mid-year reviews. Agencies are also expected to provide regular feedback and identify any deficiencies or areas of improvement for Interns and Interns NTE.

### ***Training***

Interns and Interns NTE are eligible to participate in training and development activities. While Interns are not required to complete IDPs, it is recommended that each Intern in an appointment lasting 90 days or more be placed on one. While agencies are not required to assign mentors to participants in the program, they are encouraged to assign mentors to Interns whose appointments are expected to last longer than 120 days to support their development and aid in their retention.

### ***Rotational Assignments***

Interns are eligible to participate in one- to six-month rotational assignments in their employing agencies or other agencies. Agencies may use these assignments to provide Interns with valuable knowledge, skills, and experiences; broaden their perspectives of the Federal Government; and aid in their retention.

## Conversions

For both Interns and Interns NTE, agencies have the discretion to consider interns for non-competitive conversion to term or permanent positions in the competitive service, provided that the interns have met all academic and program requirements, and that they are within 120 days of academic program completion. For Interns to be eligible for conversion, this possibility must have been included in the job announcement used to fill the Internship positions.

If the agency decides to convert the intern, then conversion to the competitive service must take place within 120 days of successful degree completion for both Interns and Interns NTE. If eligible participants are not converted within this window of time, then they must be terminated. The 120-day period, which cannot be extended, cannot be used for the participant to finish any remaining academic or program requirements—it should be used solely for administrative purposes.

An eligible participant may be converted to a position within their employing agency or any other agency across the Federal government. But conversion is not mandatory or guaranteed for interns.

If an eligible Pathways participant is converted to a term position in the competitive service, they may be non-competitively converted from that competitive term position to a career or career conditional appointment without further competition. The conversion must be made effective prior to the expiration of the competitive term appointment.

### ***Conversion Eligibility***

To be eligible for conversion, an Intern or eligible Intern NTE must:

- Be a United States citizen;
- Complete at least 640 hours of work experience acquired through the Program while enrolled as a half- or full-time degree- or certificate-seeking student;
- Complete a course of academic study, within the preceding 120-day period, at a [qualifying educational institution](#) conferring a diploma, certificate or degree;

- Meet the qualification standards for the position to which she or he will be converted;
- Receive a favorable recommendation by an official of the agency or agencies in which she or he served; and
- Meet agency-specific requirements, as specified in the Participant Agreement.

### ***Exceptions to the 640-Hour Service Requirement***

Interns must complete 640 hours of work to be eligible for conversion to the competitive service. To convert Interns more quickly to the competitive service, agencies may grant credit for up to 320 hours for:

- Another comparable Federal internship experience;
- Other comparable non-Federal (e.g., third-party) internship experience;
- Certain active-duty military or volunteer service; or
- Outstanding academic achievement and exceptional job performance.

Agencies may evaluate, consider, and grant credit for up to one-half (320 hours) of the 640-hour service requirement for comparable non-Federal internship experience in a field or functional area related to the student's target position and acquired while the student:

- Worked in, but not for, a Federal agency, pursuant to a formal internship agreement comparable to the Internship Program, between the agency and an accredited academic institution.
- Worked in, but not for, a Federal agency, pursuant to a written contract with a third-party internship provider officially established to provide internship experiences to students that are comparable to the Internship Program; or
- Served as an active-duty member of the armed forces (including the National Guard and Reserves), as defined in [5 USC 2101](#), provided the veteran's discharge or release is under honorable conditions (i.e., with a general or honorable discharge).

Student volunteer service under [5 CFR 308](#) and other Federal programs designed to give internship experience to students (e.g., fellowships and similar programs) may be evaluated, considered and credited when the experience is comparable to experience gained in the Internship Program. Agencies may also waive up to one-half (320 hours) of the 640-hour minimum service requirement when an Intern completes 320 hours of career-related work experience under an Internship Program appointment and demonstrates high potential by outstanding academic achievement and exceptional job performance.

- Outstanding academic achievement means an overall grade point average of 3.5 or better, on a 4.0 scale; standing in the top 10 percent of the student's graduating class; and/or induction into a nationally recognized scholastic honor society.
- Exceptional job performance means a formal evaluation conducted by the student's Internship supervisor(s), consistent with the applicable performance appraisal program that results in a rating of record (or summary rating of record) of higher than "Fully Successful", "Achieved Results" or equivalent.

Agencies may not grant a credit or waiver (or a combination of a credit and waiver) totaling more than 320 hours of the 640-hour service requirement.

### ***Restrictions***

Interns cannot be non-competitively converted into the Recent Graduates or Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Programs, though they may apply to either of these Programs upon completion of their academic requirements or up to nine months prior to completing their academic requirements.

Interns who separate from Federal service before or during the 120-day period after they complete their academic requirements lose their eligibility for non-competitive conversion to a term or permanent position in the competitive service.

## V. Post-Secondary Students Hiring Authority

### Program Overview

The Post-secondary Student Hiring Authority allows agencies to use strategic recruitment to hire certain post-secondary students to a position in the competitive service up to the General Schedule (GS) 11 grade level on a temporary or term basis. The regulations for this authority are found in [5 CFR 316 Subpart I](#).

### Program Requirements

#### *Eligibility*

Students enrolled or accepted for enrollment in an institution of higher education (as defined in 20 U.S.C. § 1001(a)) and pursuing a baccalaureate or graduate degree on at least a part-time basis as determined by the academic institution.

Students who have not yet started the course of study leading to the baccalaureate or graduate degree (or certificate as appropriate), may apply and be considered for a temporary appointment position in the weeks/months prior to the job being filled. These individuals must, however, complete their enrollment requirements prior to appointment.

### Program Administration

#### *Recruitment*

Agencies are required to adhere to the merit system principles and perform appropriate recruiting and advertising activities to foster a diverse and qualified applicant pool when using the authority.

#### *Public Notice*

Each agency must publicly advertise positions in a manner that provides a diverse and qualified applicant pool. This may include strategic recruitment and outreach activities and posting information about the positions on the agency's website, third-party websites and/or USAJOBS. Using USAJOBS to post the position(s) is not required. However, agencies may wish to use USAJOBS considering that system's ability to assist with the requirement to collect demographic information.

Agencies are free to additionally post announcements directly on third party recruitment boards if the agency's homepage also includes a link to a specific announcement.

The job announcement must include information about the position being filled to include:

- Position's title, series, grade level, minimum qualifications, and geographic location;
- Position's salary or salary range;
- Whether the position will be filled on a temporary or term basis (and in the case of a term appointment whether they agency will extend the appointment up to the 4-year limit);
- Whether individuals in the position will be eligible for promotion potential for conversion to the agency's permanent workforce;
- Any pertinent flexibilities that may be offered in conjunction with the position (e.g., telework opportunities or student loan repayments);
- Reasonable accommodation and equal employment opportunity statements; and
- Information on how to apply.

### ***Student Schedules***

Post-secondary Students may work either part- or full-time schedules. Supervisors are responsible for establishing work schedules with participants in accordance with [5 CFR 610.121](#). Supervisors and participants should agree on a work schedule that does not interfere with the student's academic schedule or performance, and that allows for completion of both their academic and Program requirements in a reasonable timeframe.

### ***Breaks in Program***

While breaks in program are not common, they are permissible in certain circumstances. An agency may use its discretion to either approve or deny a request for a break in program, as well as determine the length of the break.



Agencies should establish a policy that addresses breaks in program, including limitations on breaks, to manage breaks fairly and consistently in program. This policy should also provide guidance regarding the circumstances in which a break in program may be granted (e.g., medical leave, financial hardship, military service, emergencies, or other situations outside of the participant's control).

### ***Classification***

Positions filled under this authority must be classified under the General Schedule or appropriate pay plan to the -99 series of the appropriate occupational group. Positions filled under the Federal Wage System must be classified to the -01 series of the appropriate occupational group.

### ***Qualifications***

Agencies must assess whether an eligible applicant meets the Government-wide (i.e., OPM-established) or OPM-approved agency-specific minimum qualification standard for the position being filled.

### ***Promotions***

Students may not be promoted while serving on the temporary appointment (i.e., an appointment not expected to exceed 1 year).

Students appointed for an initial period expected to last more than 1 year but less than 4 years may be promoted noncompetitively provided:

- The individual meets the qualification requirements for the higher-grade position and time in grade requirements in [5 CFR part 300](#), subpart F.
- The job announcement used to fill the original position mentioned the possibility of promotions to higher grade levels.

### ***Limit on the Number of Appointments***

The number of appointments made each fiscal year may not exceed 15% of the number of student appointments (e.g., Pathway Interns and Post-Secondary student appointments) the agency head appointed during the previous fiscal year at the GS-11 level or below.

Example:

Step 1: FY 2021 Pathways Intern Appointments: 217

Step 2: FY 2022 Limit calculated as:  $217 \times .15 = 32.55$  rounded up to 33

### ***Termination***

Any appointment made under this authority expires upon the not-to exceed date of that appointment, unless the agency extends the appointment prior to expiration, if not earlier. An agency must terminate the appointment of a student after completion of the individual's academic course of study unless the student is noncompetitively converted to a permanent position in the competitive service.

### ***Reduction in Force***

Individuals whose initial appointment is for a period not to exceed 1 year are placed in tenure group 0. Individuals whose initial appointment is for a period expected to last more than 1 year are placed in tenure group III for purposes of [5 CFR part 351](#).

### ***Reporting Requirements***

Annual reporting to OPM and Congress is required. Reports must include:

- Total number of students appointed using the authority including (title, series, grade, location).
- Demographic information of those appointed (race, national origin, sex, disability, veteran status).
- Numerical Limit.
- Recruitment sources, outreach, and recruitment activities used to fill positions.
- The number of individuals appointed under the authority that have been separated.
- Information on difficulties encountered when using the authority.

## **Selection Process**

### ***Selection and Appointment***

Rating, ranking, and applying veterans' preference are not required when making appointments using this hiring authority.

Agencies are not required to provide selection priority to eligible and qualified applicants entitled to selection priority in accordance with [5 CFR part 330](#), subparts F and G, pertaining to Agency Career Transition Assistance Plans (CTAP) and Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plans (ICTAP).

### ***Employment of Relatives***

A Post-secondary student may work in the same agency as a relative so long as there is not a direct reporting relationship between them, and provided that the relative is not in a position to influence or control the student's appointment, employment, promotion, advancement, or conversion within the agency.

### ***Citizenship***

Agencies may not hire non-U.S. citizens for positions filled using the Post-secondary Student hiring authority.

## **Appointments**

Agencies may use the authority to make a temporary appointment (for an initial period not to exceed 1 year) or a term appointment (for an initial period expected to last more than 1 year but less than 4 years) in the competitive service, to coincide with the individual's academic curriculum and calendar.

In either case, an agency may extend an initial appointment for a period that will allow the student to complete his or her degree requirements, provided the criteria for the student appointment continue to be met. Appointments made under this authority, however, are nevertheless subject to the time limitations in [5 CFR part 316](#), unless the agency obtains OPM's permission to extend in individual cases.

Example 1 – An agency hires a student who is expected to complete his or her degree within 8 months. The agency would place the student on a temporary appointment

(i.e., the initial appointment is expected to last for up to 1 year). If the student takes longer than expected to complete his or her degree, the agency may extend the initial appointment for up to an additional year, for a total of 24 months. Any extensions beyond 24 months would require OPM approval.

Example 2 – An agency hires a student who is expected to complete his or her degree within 18 months. The agency would place the student on a term appointment not to exceed 4 years (i.e., the initial appointment is expected to last for more than 1 year but not more than 4 years). If the student takes longer than expected to complete his or her degree, the agency may extend the initial appointment up to the 4-year limit in increments determined by the agency. The public notification should state that the agency has the option of extending a term appointment made under these provisions up to the 4-year limit. Any extensions beyond the 4-year limit would require OPM approval.

## **Program Experience**

### ***Performance Management and Evaluation***

Agencies should establish performance goals and evaluation criteria. Agencies are also expected to provide regular feedback and identify any deficiencies or areas of improvement.

### ***Training***

Post-secondary Students should be provided with formal interactive training per year (while in the Program) that advances the goals and competencies outlined in their IDPs.

## **Conversion**

An agency may non-competitively convert a post-secondary student to a permanent position in the competitive service, within the same agency, without further competition provided the student:

- Has completed a course of study leading to the baccalaureate or graduate degree (or certificate as appropriate);

- Has completed not less than 640 hours of current continuous employment;
- Meets the OPM qualification standards for the position the student will be converted to;
- Meets time-in-grade requirements in accordance with 5 CFR part 300 subpart F.

## VI. Workforce Recruitment Program

### Program Overview

The [Workforce Recruitment Program \(WRP\)](#), managed by the Department of Labor, helps Federal agencies hire people with disabilities for internships or permanent jobs. The WRP database contains more than 2,000 resumes from college students, graduate students, and recent graduates with disabilities from a wide variety of majors and backgrounds.

#### *How WRP Can Help Agencies Recruit Talent*

Increase diversity in your workplace by hiring a job-ready candidate with a disability through WRP's website.

Search, sort, and filter candidates based on major, degree, job and location preference, keywords, and more. Access and save relevant candidate information easily.

Expedite the hiring process by connecting with WRP candidates directly regarding job opportunities.

### Program Requirements

#### *Eligibility Requirements*

Students enrolled or accepted for enrollment in an institution of higher education (as defined in 20 U.S.C. § 1001(a)) and pursuing a baccalaureate or graduate degree on at least a part-time basis as determined by the academic institution.

### Program Administration

The Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy and the Department of Defense manage the WRP. Please contact the WRP coordinator at [wrp@dol.gov](mailto:wrp@dol.gov) for questions or assistance.

### Appointments

Appointments will be made under the Schedule A appointing authority for individuals with disabilities. The Schedule A hiring authority at 5 CFR 213.3102(u) is an excepted

service appointing authority that agencies can use to non-competitively appoint individuals, including eligible veterans, who have a severe physical, psychiatric, or intellectual disability.

## **Conversions**

Individuals may be converted to the competitive service when they meet the following criteria:

- Completion of 2 or more years of satisfactory service without a break of more than 30 days, under a non-temporary Schedule A appointment;
- Recommended for conversion by the supervisor;
- Meet all requirements and conditions governing career and career-conditional appointment except those requirements concerning competitive selection; and
- Individuals is converted without a break in service of one workday

Conversion to a career or career-conditional appointment is not mandatory. The hiring agency maintains the discretion to determine whether an employee is ready for placement in the permanent career workforce. However, when the employee is performing satisfactorily, agencies are urged to convert Schedule A appointees at the end of the two-year period for noncompetitive conversion. The intent behind Schedule A is to help people with disabilities attain "civil service competitive status." Civil service competitive status is obtained through conversion to the competitive service, rather than remaining in the excepted service.

## **Trial Period**

WRP Interns may be subject to a trial period that can last up to two years, depending on the type of appointment. During the trial period, employees hired under the Schedule A are held to the same performance standards as all other employees.

## Program Experience

### *Performance Management and Evaluation*

Agencies should establish performance goals and evaluation criteria. Agencies should complete evaluations annually and hold mid-year reviews. Agencies are also expected to provide regular feedback and identify any deficiencies or areas of improvement.

### *Training*

WRP Interns should be provided with formal interactive training per year (while in the Program) that advances the goals and competencies outlined in their IDPs.

### *Mentors*

Mentors could be assigned to WRP Interns. Mentors should be current agency employees, at the journeyman level or above, outside of the intern's chain of command.

## Resources

- [Schedule A Hiring Authority for Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [U.S. Office of Personnel Management](#)



## VII. Fellowships and Other Programs

### Presidential Management Fellows Program

#### *Program Overview*

The Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program is the Federal Government's premier, two-year leadership development program for advanced degree candidates who demonstrate academic excellence, possess management and leadership potential, and have a clear interest in and commitment to public service. Advanced degree is defined as a masters, professional (e.g., J.D.), or doctorate degree.

Individuals must apply within two years of receiving a qualifying advanced degree, except that in certain situations, military members can apply within six years. Students may also apply in the fall of their final year of graduate school.

Details on this program can be found in the PMF HANDBOOK at [pmf.gov/media/slilczgs/pmf-2022-applicant-handbook-final-09-30-2021.pdf](https://pmf.gov/media/slilczgs/pmf-2022-applicant-handbook-final-09-30-2021.pdf)

Participants in the Program take part in an orientation session, receive training and professional development, complete an IDP, are assigned a mentor, and have at least one developmental assignment. Fellows who successfully complete Program requirements may be eligible for non-competitive conversion to a term or permanent position in the civil service.

OPM administers the government-wide PMF Program as a fee-for-service under the revolving fund authority. Agencies submit a one-time placement fee to OPM for each initial PMF appointment to cover program expenses.

The PMF Program appointing authority and implementing regulations can be found in [5 CFR 213.3402\(c\)](#), [5 CFR 302](#), and [5 CFR 362, Subparts A and D](#). For more information, please see the PMF Website at [pmf.gov](https://pmf.gov) or consult a representative in the PMF Program Office at OPM by emailing [pmf@opm.gov](mailto:pmf@opm.gov).

## ***Program Requirements***

### ***Pathways Memorandum of Understanding***

Prior to administering and using the Pathways Programs, an agency must enter into a Pathways MOU with OPM that addresses the requirements outlined in [5 CFR 362.104](#). These agreements, which must be renewed every two years, should be submitted to [Pathways@opm.gov](mailto:Pathways@opm.gov).

Although the Pathways Programs, including the PMF Program, and Pathways MOU requirement are intended for participants to be converted into term or permanent positions in the competitive service, the PMF Program does allow for excepted service agencies (e.g., DHS\TSA, DOT\FAA, DOJ\FBI) and those agencies in the Legislative Branch (e.g., the Library of Congress and Congressional Research Service) to participate via a PMF Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). Contact the PMF Program at [pmf@opm.gov](mailto:pmf@opm.gov) for additional information.

### ***Participant Agreement***

A required written agreement between every agency and each PMF Fellow that clearly identifies expectations, including a general description of duties, evaluation procedures, work schedules, and minimum eligibility requirements for conversion to a term or permanent position in the competitive service.

### ***Agency PMF Coordinator***

Each agency opting to participate in the PMF Program must designate an Agency PMF Coordinator (APC). The APC is responsible for Program administration plans, including coordinating recruitment and onboarding processes, and ensuring that mentors are assigned, as appropriate, and that IDPs are put in place. The APC also serves as a liaison to OPM by clarifying technical and programmatic issues, sharing best practices and lessons learned, and submitting applicable reports. The agency's PPO may also serve as the Agency PMF Coordinator.

### ***Eligibility***

To apply to the Program, individuals must have obtained an advanced degree from a qualifying educational institution within the two-year period preceding the opening date of the PMF Program's annual job announcement.

Students attending a qualifying educational institution who expect to complete a qualifying advanced degree by August 31 of the following year in which the competition is held may also apply to the Program.

Individuals may apply to the Program more than once if they meet the eligibility criteria. However, if an individual becomes a finalist and subsequently applies to the Program during the next open announcement, the individual will forfeit the status as a current finalist.

### ***Program Administration***

#### ***Program Extensions***

A Fellow's appointment may be extended for a period of up to 120 days under the employing agencies' procedures. Appointment extensions should be used to cover rare or unusual circumstances or situations. The criteria for approving appointment extensions will be identified in each agency's Pathways MOU or PMF MOA.

#### ***Promotions and Within Grade Increases***

Fellows must meet the requirements outlined in the OPM Qualification Standards for the next higher grade level and series for the position and have one year of specialized experience equivalent in difficulty to the next lower grade level (time-in-grade does not apply to the excepted service).

Fellows will be required to demonstrate satisfactory performance of "Fully Successful" or its equivalent during the performance period covered prior to becoming eligible for promotion.

Promotions are permitted up to the GS-13 grade level (if the GS-13 full performance level (FPL) is established in the position description) while under the Program.

Promotions above the GS-13 grade level can occur only on or after the date of conversion to a position in the competitive service following successful completion of the Program, assuming the position has a career ladder. Accelerated promotions are not permitted under the Program.

### ***Movement between Agencies***

A Fellow may accept a new PMF appointment with another agency at any time during their fellowship. To move to the new agency, the Fellow must separate from their current employing agency, and the new employing agency must appoint the Fellow without a break in service. Time served under the initial appointment counts toward the completion of Program requirements. If a Fellow moves between agencies within the first six months of their appointment, the current employing agency may request reimbursement for one-quarter of the OPM reimbursement fee for the Program from the new employing agency.

### ***Separations***

PMF Coordinators must provide written notification to their PPOs, as well as to OPM through the PMF Talent Acquisition System (TAS) when PMF Fellows are separated for any reason.

**Resignations** - Please see Resignations in the General Information section of this Guide.

**Terminations** - As a condition of employment, a Fellow's appointment expires at the end of the two-year fellowship, plus any agency-approved extension, unless the participant is selected for non-competitive conversion under [5 CFR 362.408](#).

A termination based on the expiration of a Fellow's appointment is not effected under 5 USC Chapter 35, 5 USC Chapter 43 or 5 USC Chapter 75, and the participant does not have appeal rights. In these instances, agencies should follow the termination-expiration of appointment procedures found in the [OPM Guide to Processing Personnel Actions](#).

If a Fellow is terminated at any time prior to the completion of the Fellow's designated appointment, agencies must determine whether the action should be processed in accordance with 5 USC Chapter 35, 5 USC Chapter 43 or 5 USC Chapter 75, and the participant must be given appeal rights. In most cases, this determination will be based on whether the Fellow meets the definition of "employee" as set forth in [5 USC 4301](#) or [5 USC 7511](#), as applicable.

Fellows may also be terminated for reasons including, but not limited to:

- Failure to follow any of the terms and conditions identified in the Participant Agreement;
- Lack of available work or for budgetary reasons;
- Misconduct or performance issues;
- Determination that the candidate is unsuitable for Federal employment and/or adjudication that candidate is no longer eligible to hold a position that is sensitive from a national security perspective (see 5 CFR 1400);
- Failure to receive a favorable recommendation for conversion from the supervisor for conversion at the end of the Program; or
- Inability of the agency, for administrative reasons, to retain the participant in the job (e.g., reorganization).

Fellows who meet the definition of “employee” under 5 USC 4301 or 5 USC 7511, as applicable, are subject to 5 CFR 432 and 5 CFR 752, respectively, for performance and conduct-based actions if the termination occurs prior to the completion of their designated appointment. Appeal rights would only be considered for the remainder of the current appointment.

For more information, please contact your agency PMF Coordinator or a representative from your ER or LR Office.

### ***Withdrawals***

A Fellow may withdraw from the Program at any time. Such a withdrawal will be treated as a resignation from the Federal service. However, an obligation established upon admission and appointment (e.g., as a result of accepting a recruitment incentive) still applies and must be repaid by the PMF Fellow.

A Fellow who held a permanent competitive service position immediately before entering the Program and who withdraws for reasons that are not related to misconduct, poor performance or suitability may, at the agency’s discretion, be placed in a permanent competitive service position. The agency’s determination in this regard is not subject to appeal.

Agency PMF Coordinators must provide written notification to their PPOs, as well as to OPM through the PMF TMS when Fellows withdraw from the Program.

### ***Readmissions***

If Fellows withdraw from the Program for reasons related to misconduct, poor performance or suitability, as determined by the agency, they will not be readmitted to the agency as PMF Fellows at any time.

If Fellows withdraw from the Program for reasons that are not related to misconduct, poor performance or suitability, they may petition the agency for readmission and reappointment to the Program. Such a petition must be in writing and include an appropriate justification. The agency may approve or deny the request for readmission. The agency PMF Coordinator must submit a written notification of the approved request for readmission to OPM. The Fellow's status in the Program upon readmission and reappointment should be addressed as part of the agency's submission. The OPM Director may overrule the agency's decision to readmit and reappoint the participant—this decision is not subject to appeal.

### ***Tenure Groups for Reduction in Force***

Please see Tenure Groups for Reduction in Force in the General Information section of this Guide.

### ***Appeal Rights***

Fellows are excepted service employees under 5 USC Chapter 43 and 5 USC Chapter 75 and have appeal rights as provided therein. For systems not covered by 5 USC Chapter 43 and 5 USC Chapter 75, Fellows have appeal rights as provided by the equivalent authorities under those systems. Appeal rights are only considered for the remainder of the current appointment.

### ***Recruitment, Assessment and Selection***

OPM administers the recruitment, assessment, and selection of Finalists annually in the fall. Each cohort is referred to as a Class Year, which corresponds to the Federal fiscal year. Upon official selection, OPM announces the list of finalists to all agencies to consider for appointment as Fellows and a public listing of finalists, based on their

consent, is posted to the PMF website at [pmf.gov](http://pmf.gov). Upon selecting and announcing Class Year Finalists, they have an appointment eligibility period of 12 months to obtain a PMF appointment. After finalists are announced, agencies are responsible for recruiting, assessing, and selecting Fellows.

### ***Posting PMF Opportunities***

Agencies must post all PMF appointment opportunities on the PMF TMS (Talent Management System). The postings should contain sufficient information (e.g., job titles, duties, and locations) for finalists to determine their interest in applying to the positions. General information and templates for agencies can be found under the “Agencies/Resources” section on the PMF website at [pmf.gov](http://pmf.gov).

### ***Filling PMF Opportunities***

Appointments to the PMF Program are made under the Schedule D appointing authority and pursuant to agencies’ Pathways MOUs or PMF MOAs. Agencies are responsible, under their specific adjudication guidance, for determining applicant suitability and for verifying qualifications prior to making appointments.

Agencies must have a process in place for accepting applications from Finalists who express an interest in their PMF positions. “Express an interest” means the Finalists have initiated contact with an agency in person or by other direct communication and asked for consideration for appointment to a specific position and includes dropping off a resume at the annual PMF Job Fair. Finalists are required to apply to an agency’s PMF appointment opportunity posted in the PMF TMS and can upload a resume. Agencies must utilize the PMF TMS to manage such applicants and record PMF appointments.

### ***Documenting the Appointment***

Appointments should be documented using the appropriate codes and remarks from the [OPM Guide to Processing Personnel Actions](#). Agencies should look to Chapter 11 of the [OPM Guide to Processing Personnel Actions](#) for the nature of action and legal authority codes and remarks to be used when documenting appointments on the [SF-52 \(Request for Personnel Action\)](#).

### ***Applying Veterans' Preference***

Veterans' preference applies to the selection process for PMF appointments. Selections must be made in accordance with the requirements in [5 CFR 302](#).

### ***Citizenship***

Agencies may hire non-U.S. citizens under any of the Pathways Programs provided they meet applicable immigration requirements, and the agency has no budgetary restrictions upon paying a non-citizen for performing the duties of the position. Participants in the Pathways Programs must be U.S. citizens, however, to be eligible for non-competitive conversion to the competitive service.

### ***Managing Fellows***

Agencies utilize the PMF TMS to track and monitor the progress of their Fellows. This includes recording reappointments, terminations, resignations, certifications, and conversions. The PMF TMS is also used to recruit for PMF appointment opportunities, recruit for rotational and training opportunities, agencies to submit PMF workforce planning estimates, query reports, to name a few.

### ***Conversions***

Agencies have the discretion to consider Fellows for non-competitive conversion to term or permanent positions in the competitive service, provided Fellows have met all Program requirements.

If the agency decides to convert the Fellow, then conversion to the competitive service must take place within 30 days of successful certification from the agency's Executive Resources Board (or equivalent) or within 120 days for any extension. If eligible participants are not converted within this window of time, then they must be terminated.

An eligible participant can only be converted to a position within their employing agency and the agency that conducted the certification process. But conversion is not mandatory or guaranteed for participants.

If an eligible Pathways participant is converted to a term position in the competitive service, they may be non-competitively converted from that competitive term position



to a career or career conditional appointment without further competition. The conversion must be made effective prior to the expiration of the competitive term appointment.

## Other Fellowships

### *Fellowships And Industry Exchange Programs Hiring Authority*

The Fellowships and Industry Exchange Programs hiring authority is a government-wide excepted service hiring authority under [5 CFR 213.3102\(r\)](#) that can be used to hire for fellowships and similar programs when recruitment is from limited applicant pools. It is sometimes referred to as the ‘r’ authority.

Agencies may use this authority to fill positions in fellowship or professional/industry exchange programs that provide:

- Developmental or professional experiences to individuals who have completed their formal education;
- Training and associateship programs designed to increase the pool of qualified candidates in a particular occupational specialty;
- Professional/industry exchange programs that provide for a cross-fertilization between the agency and the private sector to foster mutual understanding, an exchange of ideas, or to bring experienced practitioners to the agency;
- Residency programs through which participants gain experience in a Federal clinical environment;
- Programs that require a period of Government service in exchange for educational, financial, or other assistance.

Schedule A (5 CFR 213.3102(r)) provides for excepted service time-limited appointments not to exceed 4 years. Agencies must have established Fellowship programs which operate under specific agency-developed criteria in place in to use this authority. Employees hired under this authority count against the full time equivalent (FTE) ceiling.

Interns/Fellows may not be non-competitively converted to another appointment within the Federal government after their appointment ends.

## **Presidential Innovation Fellowship**

### ***Program Administration***

Presidential Innovation Fellowship (PIF) operates within Technology Transformation Services, an organization within the General Services Administration (GSA). PIF is a 12-month program, during which a Fellow will work on innovation projects across Federal agencies. Fellows and agency partners can mutually agree to extend the fellowship for up to a total of two years.

### ***Eligibility***

PIF does not require a certain level of education to be eligible to apply.

PIF are hired as full time Federal employees qualified at the GS-15 level with locality adjustment for the Washington DC Metro area.

Fellows are considered full time employees and are eligible to receive health coverage and other benefits (such as retirement savings account eligibility) through GSA.

PIF positions are typically based in Washington, DC, for the duration of the fellowship. Fellows will spend a portion of their time working at one of the Federal agencies to which they are assigned, which are often in Washington, DC, or the surrounding area.

## **Other Programs - Cybercorps Scholarship for Service (SFS)**

### ***Program Administration***

The SFS program is managed by the National Science Foundation (NSF), in collaboration with OPM, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and, in accordance with the Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2014 ([15 U.S.C. 7442](#)).

This initiative reflects the critical need for Information Technology (IT) professionals, industrial control system security professionals, and security managers in Federal, State, local, and tribal governments.

Hiring managers and human resources practitioners interested in recruiting from the SFS can gain access to this talented candidate pool by registering as an [agency official](#) or contacting the program office at [sfs@opm.gov](mailto:sfs@opm.gov). The SFS Program can

distribute job information for the agency, provide information on students available and their degree information so the agency can contact them directly or work directly with a [participating institution](#), or work directly with the agency to determine other methods that may work better.

### ***Authority***

15 U.S.C. 7442 (e), allows for agencies to directly appoint SFS participants into the excepted service for both full time cyber internship and post-graduate positions for them to meet program commitment requirements. Participants appointed under this authority may also be converted non-competitively to a term, career-conditional, or career appointment once the participant has completed their service term (1-3 years). It is also recommended that the agency establish internal policy on application of this law. State, local, or tribal government agencies and other qualifying organizations should use whatever appointing authorities are appropriate under the regulations that govern their employment practices.

### ***Eligibility***

Students identified by their institutions for SFS Scholarships must meet selection criteria based on prior academic performance, likelihood of success in obtaining the degree, and suitability for government employment. Upon graduation, scholarship recipients are required to work a period equal to the length of their scholarship in Federal, state, local, or tribal government, an interstate agency, state, local, or tribal government-affiliated non-profit that is critical infrastructure, as a cyber educator at qualified institutions of higher education that provide scholarships under this statute, or in other approved organizations (i.e., Federally Funded Research and Development Center (FFRDC)/University Affiliated Research Center (UARC)) as cybersecurity professionals.

### ***Recruitment Events***

Closed hiring events specifically for SFS students are held twice a year. Sponsoring agencies hold a live job fair (typically located in the DC area and held in January) and a Virtual Career Fair (typically held in October). These no-cost events will give your agency an opportunity to interview and hire the candidates on the spot. Please contact [sfs@opm.gov](mailto:sfs@opm.gov) for additional information.

## VIII. Apprenticeships

Federal agencies can use Registered Apprenticeship as an effective human resources strategy to recruit and hire quality candidates, train employees to the specific needs of agencies, and retain and grow a highly skilled workforce.

Registered Apprenticeship is an industry-driven, high-quality career pathway where employers can develop and prepare their future workforce, and individuals can obtain paid work experience, classroom, instruction, and a portable nationally recognized credential.

Registered Apprenticeship Programs include five key components:

1. Registered Apprenticeships are paid jobs
2. On-the-job learning in a work setting
3. Job-related classroom learning
4. One-to-one mentorship
5. Industry-recognized credentials

Registered Apprenticeship can be used within the Federal pay system to both up-skill the current workforce and to accelerate the productivity of new hires. Using standardized training curricula, which fit readily into existing agency training programs, Federal agencies can provide their employees with an opportunity to gain a comprehensive understanding of both the practical and theoretical components of mission-critical occupations. Apprentices are provided with opportunities for incremental wage increases, industry-recognized credentials, and a definitive career path within the Federal government.

There are currently over 150 registered apprenticeship programs across the Federal government and over 110,000 apprentices working in multiple industries including healthcare, financial services, transportation, IT, construction, energy, cybersecurity, and advanced manufacturing. Here are examples of a few Federal agencies that have developed Registered Apprenticeship Programs:

- National Aeronautics and Space Administration – [Engineering Technician Apprenticeship Program](#)
- Smithsonian Institution – [Facilities Management Technical Track Internship](#)
- U.S. Department of Defense – [United Services Military Apprenticeship Program](#)
- U.S. Department of Energy – [Western Area Power Administration Apprenticeship Training Program](#)
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security – [U.S. Coast Guard Academy Public Works Program](#)
- U.S. Department of Interior – [Wildland Firefighter Apprenticeship Program](#)
- U.S. Department of Justice – Federal Bureau of Prisons’ [Occupational Education Program](#)
- U.S. Department of Labor – [Apprenticeship Training Representative Program](#)
- U.S. Department of the Treasury – [Bureau of Engraving Apprenticeship Program](#)
- U.S. Department of Transportation – [Federal Railroad Safety Inspector Program](#)

To learn more about Registered Apprenticeship in the Federal government and how to get started, reach out to the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Apprenticeship at [apprenticeship@dol.gov](mailto:apprenticeship@dol.gov). Visit [apprenticeship.gov/federal-agency-apprenticeship-programs](https://www.apprenticeship.gov/federal-agency-apprenticeship-programs) for additional information and a full list of agencies that have Registered Apprenticeship programs, including case studies.

## IX. Resources

### Appendix 1. Definitions

**Advanced Degree:** A professional or graduate degree (e.g., Master’s, Ph.D., or Juris Doctorate (J.D.)) from an accredited academic institution.

**Advertisement:** A notice to the public on [USAJOBS](#), and agency website or other third-party website which provides information on a job opportunity announcement (JOA), as well as instructions on how to apply for the Job Announcement (JA) through [USAJOBS](#) or the agency’s website.

**Appointment:** Any personnel action that brings an individual onto the employment rolls (staff) of an agency.

**Registered Apprenticeships:** Industry-driven, high-quality career pathways where employers can develop and prepare their future workforce, and apprentices can obtain paid work experience, classroom instruction, and a portable, nationally recognized credential that will enable them to immediately enter a specific occupation.

**Break in service:** The time when an employee is no longer on the payroll of an agency. A separation of less than three calendar days is not considered a break in service. The intent of the program is for students to either attend classes, work at the agency or both. An agency may use its discretion in either approving or denying a request for a break in service. (In computing creditable service for benefits (e.g., leave accrual and reduction in force retention), a separation of one, two or three calendar days is not considered to be a break in service; a separation of four or more calendar days is a break in service and the days of separation are subtracted from the employee’s total creditable service.)

**Certificate Program:** Post-secondary education, in a [qualifying educational institution](#), equivalent to at least one academic year of full-time study that is part of an accredited college-level, technical, trade, vocational or business school curriculum.

**Competitive Service:** All civilian positions in the Federal Government that are not specifically excepted from the civil service laws by or pursuant to statute, by the President or by OPM under Rule VI, and that are not in the Senior Executive Service (SES).

**Excepted Service:** Positions outside of the competitive service and the SES. Excepted service positions have been excepted from the requirements of the competitive service by statute, Executive order or OPM regulation. More information about excepted service can be found in 5 U.S.C. 2103 and parts 213 and 302 of title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

**Fellowship:** A professional development experience within a defined period of time for individuals with several years of full-time work experience or individuals accepted for enrollment or are enrolled in and seeking a degree on a full- or part-time basis in the types of accredited educational institutions mentioned above. Fellowships often provide specialized experience and further training for a particular career path or field.

**Individual Development Plan (IDP):** A strategic roadmap that employees can use to create and track their career planning, professional development, and training activities. It should make note of an individual's target position, learning objectives and developmental requirements.

**Internship:** An experiential learning opportunity within a defined time period for an individual who is accepted for enrollment or is enrolled in and seeking a degree (e.g., diploma, certificate) in an accredited educational institution, on a full or part-time basis (as defined by the educational institution in which the student is enrolled). This includes high schools, technical and vocational schools, 2- and 4-year colleges and universities, graduate and professional schools, certificate programs, and distance learning programs.

**Job Announcement (JA):** A Federal job announcement for hiring opportunities that is posted on [USAJOBS](https://www.usajobs.gov).

**Merit System Principles:** Nine basic principles established in 5 USC 2301 and to which Federal Executive Branch managers must abide. Other, more specific, provisions of title 5 of the United States Code and OPM regulations are intended, in large part, to apply these principles.

**Non-Competitive Conversion:** The change of an employee from one appointment to another appointment without competition under the same or a different authority.

**Preference Eligible:** Veterans who have been separated from the armed forces under honorable conditions and who served on active duty during a war or in a campaign or expedition, for which a campaign badge has been authorized, or during defined periods. It also includes disabled veterans and, under certain circumstances, the mothers, spouses or unmarried widows or widowers of certain veterans.

**Schedule A Appointment:** A category of excepted service appointment that is applicable to positions that are indefinitely removed from the competitive service but are not of a confidential or policy determining character, and that are not in the Senior Executive Service, but for which it is impracticable to examine. Examining for this purpose means application of the qualification standards and requirements established for the competitive service.

**Schedule D Appointment:** The schedule under which appointing authorities established by Executive Order 13562, which were designed to appoint individuals to the various Pathways Programs, are consolidated and published.

**Supervisor:** An individual who is responsible for managing a participant(s).

**Temporary Appointment:** Temporary appointments are those initially made not to exceed one year.

**Term Appointment:** An appointment made to a position in the competitive service for a period that is expected to last longer than one year, but no more than four years.

**Underserved Communities:** Populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, who have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life. In the context of the Federal



workforce, this term includes individuals who belong to communities of color, such as Black and African American, Hispanic, or Latino, Native American, Alaska Native, and Indigenous, Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, and North African persons. It also includes individuals who belong to communities that face discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity (including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, gender non-conforming, and non-binary (LGBTQ+) persons); persons who face discrimination based on pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions; parents; and caregivers. It also includes individuals who belong to communities that face discrimination based on their religion or disability; first-generation professionals or first-generation college students; individuals with limited English proficiency; immigrants; individuals who belong to communities that may face employment barriers based on older age or former incarceration; persons who live in rural areas; veterans and military spouses; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty, discrimination, or inequality. Individuals may belong to more than one underserved community and face intersecting barriers.

**USAJOBS:** A website that provides the public with comprehensive information regarding Federal employment. Agencies must post their job announcements at [USAJOBS.gov](https://www.usajobs.gov) as part of the public notice requirement.

### *Helpful Links*

- [Final Rule](#) - Excepted Service, Career and Career-Conditional Employment; and Pathways Programs
- [Pathways Toolkit for Hiring Manager and Supervisors](#)
- [Pathways Programs Handbook](#)

## **Appendix 2. Paid Internships, Fellowships, And Apprenticeships Chart**

The Federal government offers a variety of paid internships, fellowships, and apprenticeships for individuals who seek early careers in public service, as well as for those seeking mid-career changes in employment. These include positions found Government-wide (e.g., Pathways Programs) as well as specific programs unique to individual Federal agencies (e.g., U.S. State Department professional fellowships).

Eligibility, qualifications requirements, the application process, application deadlines, program features, duration, and conversion provisions (e.g., the transition for certain interns to permanent civil service employment when applicable) for internships, fellowships, and apprenticeships vary depending on the agency, program, and hiring authority used to appoint individuals. For example, one type of internship may have applicants complete an application through USAJOBS while another may require that specific procedures be followed at an agency's individual website, and may include submission of an essay, interviews, or other types of assessment.

This chart highlights some of the common paths job seekers use for initial entry into Federal employment.

<b>Program</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Eligibility, Requirements, and Features</b>
<b>Pathways Internship</b>	<p>This program is designed to provide students enrolled in a wide variety of educational institutions, from high school to graduate level, with opportunities to work in agencies and explore Federal careers while still in school.</p> <p>Students are paid for the work performed.</p> <p>These positions are posted on USAJOBS.</p> <p>Website: <a href="http://usajobs.gov">usajobs.gov</a></p>	<p>Eligibility: High school, trade schools, two- and four-year colleges (undergraduate, graduate, and professional degrees).</p> <p>May work part- or full-time.</p> <p>Students alternate between work and study until they complete educational requirements and required work hours.</p> <p>Participants who successfully complete the internship may be eligible for conversion to a permanent position in the competitive civil service.</p>
<b>Post-Secondary Student Hiring Authority</b>	<p>This program allows agencies to hire certain post-secondary students to positions in the competitive civil service up to the General Schedule (GS) 11 grade level on a temporary or term basis.</p> <p>An agency may appoint individuals, on a time limited basis, to a temporary appointment (for an initial period not to exceed 1 year), or a term appointment (for an initial period expected to last more than 1 year but less than 4 years), to coincide with the individual's academic curriculum and calendar.</p> <p>These positions may be posted on the agency's website, third party websites and/or USAJOBS.</p>	<p>Eligibility: Students must be enrolled or accepted for pursuing a bachelor's or graduate degree on at least a part-time basis (as determined by the academic institution). Students who are enrolled but have not yet started the course of study may apply and be considered.</p> <p>Students must meet the minimum qualifications of the position.</p> <p>An agency may convert a post-secondary student to a permanent appointment in the competitive civil service, within that same agency, without further competition if the student has completed the course of study leading to a bachelor's or graduate degree and meets the qualification standards for the position to which converted.</p>

Program	Description	Eligibility, Requirements, and Features
<p><b>Pathways Recent Graduates</b></p>	<p>This program offers developmental experiences in the Federal Government intended to promote careers in the civil service to individuals who have recently graduated from qualifying educational institutions or programs. The program lasts for one year (unless the training requirements of the position warrant a longer and more structured training program).</p> <p>These positions are posted on USAJOBS.</p> <p>This unique experience includes an orientation program, mentorship, an individual development plan, at least 40 hours of formal, interactive training, and more.</p> <p>Website: <a href="https://www.usajobs.gov/Help/working-in-government/unique-hiring-paths/students/">https://www.usajobs.gov/Help/working-in-government/unique-hiring-paths/students/</a></p>	<p>Eligibility: Recent graduates who have completed, within the previous two years, a qualifying associates, bachelors, masters, professional, doctorate, vocational or technical degree or certificate from a qualifying educational institution.</p> <p>Veterans unable to apply within two years of receiving their degree, due to military service obligation, have as much as six years after degree completion to apply.</p> <p>Participants who successfully complete the program may be eligible for conversion to a permanent position in the competitive civil service.</p>
<p><b>College Graduate Hiring Authority</b></p>	<p>This program allows agencies to hire recent college graduates to fill professional and administrative positions in the competitive civil service at GS-11 level and below.</p> <p>These positions may be posted on the agency’s website, third party websites and/or USAJOBS.</p>	<p>Eligibility: Students must be recent graduates who have completed, within the previous two years, a bachelor’s, or graduate degree.</p>

Program	Description	Eligibility, Requirements, and Features
<p><b>Presidential Management Fellows (PMF)</b></p>	<p>This is the Federal Government’s flagship leadership development program for advanced degree candidates. Created more than three decades ago, the program attracts and selects from among the best candidates and is designed to develop a cadre of potential Federal Government leaders.</p> <p>The program is centrally administered by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM). OPM announces the opportunity to apply (usually in the fall) via USAJOBS.</p> <p>The PMF experience includes an orientation program, senior-level mentorship, an individual development plan, developmental opportunities, at least 80 hours of formal, interactive training each year, and more.</p> <p>Websites: <a href="https://www.usajobs.gov/Help/working-in-government/unique-hiring-paths/students/">https://www.usajobs.gov/Help/working-in-government/unique-hiring-paths/students/</a></p> <p>And <a href="http://www.pmf.gov/">www.pmf.gov/</a></p>	<p>Eligibility: Individuals who have completed within the past two years, a qualifying advanced degree (e.g., masters or professional degree such as M.D. or J.D.).</p> <p>Candidates are usually hired at GS-9 thru GS-12 or equivalent.</p> <p>After successful program completion and job performance, the PMF may be converted to a permanent position in the competitive civil service.</p>

Program	Description	Eligibility, Requirements, and Features
<p><b>Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP)</b></p>	<p>Connects Federal and private-sector employers nationwide with college students and recent graduates with disabilities for summer or permanent jobs.</p> <p>Candidates represent all majors and range from college freshmen to graduate and law school students.</p> <p>Information from candidates is compiled in a searchable database that is available through their website. Website: <a href="http://wrp.gov">wrp.gov</a></p>	<p>Students enrolled or accepted for enrollment in an institution of higher education (as defined in 20 U.S.C. § 1001(a)) and pursuing a baccalaureate or graduate degree on at least a part-time basis as determined by the academic institution.</p> <p>Appointments will be made under the Schedule A appointing authority for individuals with disabilities.</p> <p>This is a special (excepted) appointing authority that agencies can use to non-competitively appoint individuals, including eligible veterans, who have a psychiatric, intellectual, or severe physical disability.</p>
<p><b>Apprenticeships</b></p>	<p>Apprenticeship programs offer opportunities for paid, relevant workplace experience while acquiring the skills and credentials valued by federal employers. Federal Government agencies can use apprenticeships as an effective human resources strategy to recruit quality candidates, train employees to the specific needs of agencies, and retain and grow a highly skilled workforce. Using standardized training curricula, which fit readily into existing agency training programs, Federal agencies can ensure their employees have a comprehensive understanding of both the practical and theoretical components of mission-critical occupations. Apprentices are provided with opportunities for incremental wage increases, industry-recognized credentials, and a definitive career path within the Federal Government.</p>	<p>To learn more about federal apprenticeship opportunities, visit <a href="https://www.apprenticeship.gov/">https://www.apprenticeship.gov/</a></p>

### Appendix 3. Agency-Specific Internships And Fellowships Chart

Individual Federal agencies offer a variety of internships and fellowship opportunities for students, recent graduates, professionals, and other job seekers who want to connect with agency missions and employ their unique education, background, and skill sets in service to the Nation.

<b>Federal Agency</b>	<b>Website</b>
<b>Department of Agriculture</b>	<a href="https://www.usda.gov/youth/career">https://www.usda.gov/youth/career</a>
<b>Department of Commerce</b>	<a href="https://www.commerce.gov/work-with-us/internships">https://www.commerce.gov/work-with-us/internships</a>
<b>Department of Defense</b>	<a href="https://www.dodciviliancareers.com/civiliancareers/internships">https://www.dodciviliancareers.com/civiliancareers/internships</a>
<b>Department of Education</b>	<a href="http://www2.ed.gov/students/prep/job/intern/index.html">www2.ed.gov/students/prep/job/intern/index.html</a>
<b>Department of Energy</b>	<a href="http://orise.orau.gov/doescholars/">orise.orau.gov/doescholars/</a>
<b>Food and Drug Administration (FDA)</b>	<a href="https://www.fda.gov/about-fda/jobs-and-training-fda/scientific-internships-fellowships-trainees-and-non-us-citizens">https://www.fda.gov/about-fda/jobs-and-training-fda/scientific-internships-fellowships-trainees-and-non-us-citizens</a>
<b>Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)</b>	<a href="https://www.hhs.gov/careers/">https://www.hhs.gov/careers/</a>
<b>Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)</b>	<a href="http://cdc.gov/fellowships">cdc.gov/fellowships</a>
<b>National Institutes of Health (NIH)</b>	<a href="http://training.nih.gov/programs">training.nih.gov/programs</a>
<b>Department of Homeland Security (DHS)</b>	<a href="http://dhs.gov/homeland-security-careers/students">dhs.gov/homeland-security-careers/students</a>
<b>Department of the Interior</b>	<a href="http://doi.gov/pathways">doi.gov/pathways</a>
<b>Department of Justice</b>	<a href="http://justice.gov/legal-careers">justice.gov/legal-careers</a>
<b>Department of State</b>	<a href="http://careers.state.gov/interns-fellows">careers.state.gov/interns-fellows</a>

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<b>Federal Agency</b>	<b>Website</b>
<b>Department of Transportation</b>	<a href="https://www.transportation.gov/careers/internships">transportation.gov/careers/internships</a>
<b>Department of Treasury</b>	<a href="https://home.treasury.gov/about/careers-at-treasury/studentinternship-programs">https://home.treasury.gov/about/careers-at-treasury/studentinternship-programs</a>
<b>Department of Veterans Affairs</b>	<a href="https://vacareers.va.gov">vacareers.va.gov</a> <a href="https://www.va.gov/students-and-trainees/">Students and Trainees (va.gov)</a>
<b>Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)/Department of Justice</b>	<a href="https://fbijobs.gov/students">fbijobs.gov/students</a>
<b>National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)</b>	<a href="https://www.nasa.gov/stem-ed-resources/nasa-internships-and-fellowships.html">nasa.gov/stem-ed-resources/nasa-internships-and-fellowships.html</a>
<b>Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC)</b>	<a href="https://www.nrc.gov/about-nrc/employment/students.html">nrc.gov/about-nrc/employment/students.html</a>
<b>U.S. Intelligence Careers</b>	<a href="https://www.intelligencecareers.gov/students-and-internships">https://www.intelligencecareers.gov/students-and-internships</a>
<b>U.S. Supreme Court Fellows Program</b>	<a href="https://supremecourt.gov/fellows/default.aspx">supremecourt.gov/fellows/default.aspx</a>
<b>U.S. Supreme Court Internship Program</b>	<a href="https://supremecourt.gov/jobs/internship/InternshipProgram.aspx">supremecourt.gov/jobs/internship/InternshipProgram.aspx</a>
<b>U.S. House of Representatives</b>	<a href="https://www.house.gov/employment">house.gov/employment</a>
<b>U.S. Senate</b>	<a href="https://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/visiting/h_multi_sections_and_teasers/employment.htm">senate.gov/pagelayout/visiting/h_multi_sections_and_teasers/employment.htm</a>



## Appendix 4. Pathways Internship Program Flexibilities Chart

There are many Government-wide flexibilities within the regulations that can help you effectively use the Pathways Internship Program. We encourage you to review your Pathways MOU and agency-specific policies before using any of these strategies. Please consult your agency PPO or a human resources professional for further guidance.

<b>Flexibility: Agencies May...</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>How It Works</b>	<b>Supporting Citation or Reference</b>
<b>Conduct outreach on campuses</b>	Target mission-critical and hard-to-reach occupations and audiences  Meet agency DEIA goals  Ability to recruit locally and/or use recruiting networks	Agencies have the discretion to conduct outreach on campuses before or without posting a job announcement (JA) on USAJOBS, provided they are participating in informational or awareness-type events or liaison activities.	<a href="#">5 CFR 362.203(a)</a>  <a href="#">OPM Pathways FAQs (#5-10)</a>
<b>Collect applications at an on-site recruiting event</b>	Maintain relationships with talent partners  Target mission-critical and hard-to-reach occupations and audiences  Meet agency DEIA goals  Reduce recruitment timeline	To collect applications at an on-site recruiting event for Interns, agencies should:  Post an advertisement that publicizes the event on USAJOBS;  Make the event open to the public and part of an overall recruitment strategy;  Provide instructions on how candidates can apply if they are unable to attend the event; and  Have HR professionals and hiring managers on-site to assess applications and conduct interviews, as well as make selections.	<a href="#">5 CFR 362.105</a>  <a href="#">OPM Pathways FAQs (#7, #9 and #10)</a>  Consult agency’s Pathways policy.

<b>Flexibility: Agencies May...</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>How It Works</b>	<b>Supporting Citation or Reference</b>
<p><b>Post an advertisement rather than a JA</b></p>	<p>Experience greater flexibility in advertising and receiving applications through means other than, or in addition to, your Talent Acquisition System (TAS) (e.g., USA Staffing)</p> <p>Receive and/or review applications at on-site recruiting events</p> <p>Make the rating and ranking process more manageable for HR professionals</p> <p>Make the review of the list of eligibles more manageable for hiring managers</p>	<p>Agencies may advertise an Internship position using a JA and posting an advertisement on USAJOBS.</p>	<p><a href="#">5 CFR 362.104(c)</a></p> <p><a href="#">5 CFR 362.105(b)</a></p> <p><a href="#">5 CFR 362.203</a></p> <p><a href="#">OPM Pathways FAQs (#12)</a></p>

<b>Flexibility: Agencies May...</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>How It Works</b>	<b>Supporting Citation or Reference</b>
<p><b>Recruit students up to nine months before they complete their academic requirements</b></p>	<p>Enhance your ability to compete with private sector and other employers for talented students and recent graduates.</p> <p>Experience greater flexibility in syncing your recruitment timelines with academic calendars</p> <p>Provide applicants with a greater number of employment opportunities</p>	<p>Agencies inform applicants in the JA of how soon they may apply for the position prior to completing their academic requirements.</p> <p>The JA should state that an applicant must be a student at the time of appointment.</p> <p>Agencies using their own qualification standards for Pathways Interns may adopt similar provisions to use this flexibility.</p>	<p><a href="#">OPM Pathways FAQs (#21)</a>  <a href="#">OPM Qualification Standards (General Policies, Application of Qualification Standards, 4.d. Educational and Training Provisions or Requirements, College or University Education)</a></p>
<p><b>Use pay flexibilities and/or incentives for Internship positions</b></p>	<p>Attract and retain talented students</p> <p>Enhance your ability to compete with private sector and other employers for talented candidates</p>	<p>Agencies determine if the use of incentives (e.g., recruitment, relocation, and retention incentives; student loan repayment assistance; superior qualifications and special needs pay settings; maximum payable rate rules; etc.) is appropriate and offers them to eligible applicants.</p>	<p><a href="#">5 CFR 362.105(j)</a>  <a href="#">5 CFR 531.212</a>  <a href="#">5 CFR 537</a>  <a href="#">5 CFR 575 (Subparts A, B and C)</a>                      Consult your agency's policies.</p>
<p><b>Consider non-U.S. citizens for Internship positions</b></p>	<p>Expand the pool of qualified applicants for mission-critical positions, STEM in particular.</p>	<p>Agencies may hire non-U.S. citizens under any of the Pathways Programs provided they meet applicable immigration requirements.</p> <p>Participants in the Programs must be U.S. citizens to be eligible for non-competitive conversion to the competitive service.</p>	<p><a href="#">5 CFR 362.105(e)</a></p>

<b>Flexibility: Agencies May...</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>How It Works</b>	<b>Supporting Citation or Reference</b>
<b>Choose whether to appoint not-to-exceed (NTE) or longer-term, indefinite Interns</b>	Hire the types of Interns who will best meet your agency's needs.	<p>Intern NTE appointments should be used for work that is short-term, of a project-oriented nature or of similarly limited duration. Intent to convert Interns NTE should be rare, though the JAs for their positions should indicate the possibility of such conversion.</p> <p>For Interns NTE who were hired without the possibility of non-competitive conversion to be converted to longer-term, indefinite Interns, they must compete for these opportunities.</p>	<p><a href="#">5 CFR 362.203</a></p> <p><a href="#">OPM Pathways FAQs (#41-42)</a></p>
<b>Establish a minimum GPA above the 2.0 requirement for Internship positions</b>	Ensure that Interns have an incentive to maintain a strong academic record while participating in the Internship Program.	Agencies should review applicant data to see what impact, if any, a higher GPA would have had on applicant pools for Pathways Internship positions. If no adverse effect is found on veterans who applied to and were qualified for the opportunities, agencies may establish a GPA above the 2.0 requirement.	<a href="#">OPM Pathways FAQs (#15 and #24)</a>
<b>Limit the number of days a JA is open</b>	<p>Make the rating and ranking process more manageable for HR professionals</p> <p>Make the review of the list of eligibles more manageable for hiring managers</p>	Agencies must list the opening and closing dates in the JA.	<p><a href="#">5 CFR 302.301</a></p> <p><a href="#">OPM Pathways FAQs (#15)</a></p>

<b>Flexibility: Agencies May...</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>How It Works</b>	<b>Supporting Citation or Reference</b>
<b>Set a cap on the number of applications received</b>	<p>Make the rating and ranking process more manageable for HR professionals</p> <p>Make the review of the list of eligibles more manageable for hiring managers</p>	<p>Agencies must include language in the JA that states that it will close after receipt of a specified number of applications (e.g., 200 applications).</p>	<p><a href="#">5 CFR 302.301</a></p> <p><a href="#">OPM Pathways FAQs (#15)</a></p>
<b>Decide which qualification standards to use to hire Interns</b>	<p>Target qualified applicants</p> <p>Enhance the quality of your applicant pool</p>	<p>Agencies may establish agency-specific qualification standards or use the OPM qualification standards for the competitive service in place of the “Group Coverage Qualification Standards for Schedule D Internship Appointments.”</p>	<p><a href="#">5 CFR 362.203(c)</a></p> <p><a href="#">OPM Pathways FAQs (#29)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Group Coverage Qualification Standards for Schedule D Internship Appointments</a></p>
<b>Modify Participant Agreements</b>	<p>Ensure that the expectations outlined in Participant Agreements best meet your agency’s needs.</p>	<p>Agencies have discretion to tailor Participant Agreements. While these documents must include certain elements (e.g., general descriptions of duties and work schedules), agencies have the flexibility to incorporate additional components into them (e.g., points of contact at educational institutions).</p>	<p><a href="#">5 CFR 362.106</a></p>

<b>Flexibility: Agencies May...</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>How It Works</b>	<b>Supporting Citation or Reference</b>
<p><b>Waive up to 320 of the hours needed for Interns to convert to the competitive service</b></p>	<p>Enhance your ability to compete with private sector and other employers for talented students and recent graduates</p> <p>Recognize the knowledge, skills, and abilities that students and recent graduates gained through diverse experiences</p> <p>Gain the ability to convert qualified, valuable employees more quickly and aid in their retention</p>	<p>Conversion eligibility requirements, including hours required for conversion, must be reflected in Participant Agreements.</p> <p>Interns must complete 640 hours of work to be eligible for conversion to the competitive service. To quickly convert Interns to the competitive service, agencies may grant credit for up to 320 hours for:</p> <p>Outstanding academic achievement and exceptional job performance.</p> <p>Other comparable Federal* or non-Federal (e.g., third-party) internship experience; or</p> <p>Certain active-duty military or volunteer service.</p> <p>*Hours spent in a previous Pathways Internship may be credited toward the hours needed for Interns to convert to the competitive service.</p>	<p><a href="#">5 CFR 362.204</a></p> <p><a href="#">OPM Program Fact Sheets (Internship Program)</a></p>

<b>Flexibility: Agencies May...</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>How It Works</b>	<b>Supporting Citation or Reference</b>
<p><b>Convert eligible Interns to permanent positions at any agency within 120 days of Program completion</b></p>	<p>Expand the pool of qualified applicants for positions at agencies across Government</p> <p>Select candidates from a pre-vetted set of students and recent graduates</p> <p>Retain talented students and recent graduates, and meet your hiring needs</p>	<p>An Intern who has met all Program requirements may be converted to a position within her or his employing agency or any other agency within 120 days of Program completion.</p> <p>Agencies are encouraged to reach out to one another to find and connect with conversion-eligible Interns from other organizations.</p>	<p><a href="#">5 CFR 362.107(c)</a></p>
<p><b>Convert Interns to term appointments first and then to permanent positions later</b></p>	<p>Retain Pathways participants even when permanent positions are not immediately available</p>	<p>Agencies may convert a Pathways Intern to a term appointment—one to four years—within 120 days of Program completion.</p> <p>Agencies may then convert an Intern from the term appointment to a career or career conditional (permanent) appointment when a position or slot becomes available.</p>	<p><a href="#">5 CFR 362.107(b)</a></p> <p><a href="#">5 CFR 362.204(a)</a></p> <p><a href="#">OPM Pathways FAQs (#45)</a></p>

## Appendix 5. Post-Secondary Students Hiring Authority Chart

Comparison of Post-Secondary Students Hiring Authority to the Pathways Internship Program

<b>Post-Secondary Students</b>	<b>Pathways Internship</b>
Competitive Service Appointments	Excepted Service Appointments
USAJOBS optional	USAJOBS required
Students in bachelor's degree or advanced degree program	Students in high school, technical vocational or trade school; an associate's degree, bachelor's degree, or advanced degree program
Veterans' preference not required	Veterans' preference required
Strategic recruiting activities required	Strategic recruiting activities required
15% cap on the number of appointments	No cap on the number of appointments
Conversion to permanent positions available	Conversion to permanent positions available



## Appendix 6. Assessments

OPM offers various assessments resources and tools for agency use. The following highlights policy, tools, and educational resources available to agencies.

- [\*\*Policy Assessment & Selection Website\*\*](#) – includes presentations and tools that agencies may use to develop an assessment strategy, and to learn more about various assessment tools and the use of assessments to meet agency specific needs in hiring (e.g., [Assessing Students and Recent Grads](#)).
- [\*\*Delegated Examining Operations Handbook \(DEOH\)\*\*](#) – contains information on the assessment process and policy.
  - Chapter 2– Identifying the Job and its Assessments (p. 21)
  - Chapter 5 – Assess Applicants (p.103)
  - Appendix D – OPM’s Job Analysis Methodology (p. 230)

## **Appendix 7. USAJOBS Resources**

### ***Social Media Recruitment Support***

USAJOBS can amplify the outreach of your agency's job announcements through our social media channels. HR Specialists or hiring managers can send the USAJOBS program office the job announcement and position information (e.g., job title, location, major duties), and the USAJOBS team will highlight the job announcement through a post on LinkedIn or Twitter.

### ***Social Media Content Information***

- We only highlight jobs posted on USAJOBS
- Tweets are 280 characters, no limit for LinkedIn posts
- Send requests to [Victoria.Lykins@opm.gov](mailto:Victoria.Lykins@opm.gov)
- Position title
- Location of position
- Major duties (for LinkedIn posts)
- Name of hiring agency
- Requested posting window
- JOA open and close dates
- JOA link (or email us the link when the JOA opens)

### ***USAJOBS Agency Talent Portal***

The Agency Talent Portal (ATP) is a recruitment marketing platform offering targeted recruitment services to help Human Resources specialists, recruiters and hiring managers discover highly skilled talent. With ATP, users can create and collaborate on recruitment campaigns, search over 1.5 million resumes, and create career-related events to post on USAJOBS.

Users can search “searchable” USAJOBS Profiles and filter them by:

- Series
- Grade
- Occupational Skills
- Location
- Hiring Paths
- Education

This tool is available to Federal employees who work in recruitment, including HR specialists, recruiters, hiring managers, disability program managers and event coordinators. To gain access, send an email to: [Recruiter-Help@USAJOBS.gov](mailto:Recruiter-Help@USAJOBS.gov). The USAJOBS Help Center will review your request and grant you access depending on the agency’s policies. You will receive an invite email that will be good for 24 hours.



## **U.S. Office of Personnel Management**

Employee Services  
1900 E Street NW, Washington DC 20415

[OPM.gov](https://www.opm.gov)