

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT

Many graduates are interested in working for the government but have little awareness of the opportunities available to them or the procedures for locating positions in this work sector. When job seekers speak of “working for the government,” they are often speaking of the federal government executive agencies only. But there are judicial agencies, staffs of legislators, private organizations that

offer services to government agencies, and more. These opportunities are not limited to the federal government.

Government (federal, state, and local) continues to offer opportunities to the graduating college student, and the salaries are becoming progressively more competitive with business and industry.

This handout provides insight into some of these options as well as information and tips on the job search process. This sector is constantly changing and growing. The job seeker should understand the complex systems involved in the job search process.

The Federal Government

USAJOBS is the Federal Government's official Employment Information System. On USAJOBS, you can explore over 15,000 jobs on any given day, build and store up to five resumes for applying to Federal jobs, and access a wide-range of information about Federal agencies and different Federal employment issues.

Most Federal agencies do their own recruiting and hiring. Agencies post their announcements on USAJOBS with all of the instructions and procedures for applying to that particular position. Because agencies do their own hiring and have different requirements, procedures and information required are often varied between agencies. All agencies require the basic resume information but it varies on how much additional information is needed in order for the agency to process your application. Examples include transcripts, forms,

narrative descriptions of competencies, questionnaires, etc. It's recommended that you follow the instructions very carefully. Information not submitted can result in your application not being evaluated.

Many announcements allow applicants to apply online directly to the agency. Using the online method, you decide which resume to submit for that particular job. You can also create cover letters for submission. Contact information at the agency is also given in the announcement. If you have questions, call or email the contact person.

USAJOBS can be found at <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/>

Application to Independent Federal Agencies

Certain agencies are not required to use the regular Civil Service system and thus fill their positions through their own hiring systems. If you are interested in a job with one of these agencies, you should contact the

organization directly:

- Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve
- Central Intelligence Agency
- Defense Intelligence Agency
- Department of State
- Department of Veterans Affairs
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- General Accounting Administration
- International Agency for Development
- National Security Agency
- U.S. Postal Service
- U.S. Mission to the United Nations
- U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission

These agencies' websites all have information and instructions on how to apply for positions within the agency.

For information on applying to jobs on Capitol Hill or other federal agencies, please refer to the section later in this document.

PA State Civil Service

Pennsylvania residency is required at the time of application for most state civil service positions. To determine if Pennsylvania residency is required for a job title, refer to the appropriate test announcement under Job Requirements. Students who currently reside and are enrolled in colleges, universities or technical schools in Pennsylvania and who have Pennsylvania mailing addresses are eligible to apply, prior to graduation, for positions requiring Pennsylvania residency. After graduation, you must demonstrate intent to continue residency in Pennsylvania.

The following steps describe the basic process required to apply for civil service employment.

1. Review the "Summary of Civil Service Examinations." This summary is updated daily and lists test announcements of jobs that are open for application and deadline dates for submitting an application.
2. View test announcements for the jobs in which you are interested, available in the Employment Resources Room in 114 MBNA Career Services Center, or at the Pennsylvania State Civil Service commission web site, www.spsc.state.pa.us. The test announcement provides information on the nature of the work, job requirements, job opportunities, testing, test results and how to apply. It also indicates the opening and closing dates when an application can be submitted. Each test announcement requires a separate application.
3. Read the test announcements thoroughly. Be sure that you meet the minimum requirements for each job. If you are not sure you qualify, contact one of the Commission Offices. If you do not meet all minimum requirements, your test results will not be counted.
4. Complete a civil service application for employment for each test announcement that you have selected. The test announcement may specify what other documents to submit with the application (e.g., veteran's credentials, application supplements, etc.). At present, you may only use the on-line application if you are interested in taking a written examination at the Harrisburg, Philadelphia or Pittsburgh offices. As such, the on-line electronic job listings is not a complete listing—it only lists exams that can be taken at the Harrisburg, Philadelphia or Pittsburgh offices, and which don't require supplements. You can print out a hard copy of the application, at www.spsc.state.pa.us/application/appl.htm. Have each hard copy application notarized and submit it according to the instructions provided in the application and test announcement.
5. The Commission offers reasonable testing accommodations for persons with disabilities. It is your responsibility to inform the Commission of your needs prior to the test date. This information will be kept confidential.
6. If you apply for a job that requires a written, oral or performance examination, you will be scheduled for the exam and notified of the date, place and time to report for testing.
7. The Commission will send you the results of your examination or rating. If you pass the test and meet the minimum requirements, your name is placed on the list of eligible candidates (eligible list) for that job title according to your score. Positions in the merit system are filled from this pool of eligible candidates.
8. When a job vacancy occurs, the hiring agency requests an eligible list from which to interview for that job title. Hiring is normally done from the highest-ranking candidates on an eligible list.
9. If you are interviewed and not selected for the position, your name remains on the eligible list to be considered for future vacancies for a specified period of

time. Your standing on the eligible list may change as more persons are tested and added, and as appointments are made. If you are selected for the position, the agency will notify you and establish a start date.

State Legislative Jobs

If you are interested in working within the legislative or judicial branch of State Government, your job search will require personal contact. For the legislative branch, personal staff positions are acquired through word-of-mouth (networking) and by contacting a state legislator or his/her staff members.

If you are interested in seeking a job on a state legislator's staff, you may want to consult the volume entitled State Elected Officials and the Legislatures.

If you are interested in working for a legislative agency or standing committee of the State House or Senate, consult the volume entitled State Legislative Leadership, Committees, and Staff.

A few good places to look on-line are:

- **govtjobs.com:** <http://www.govtjobs.com/jobsourc.html#state>
- **State and Local Government on the Net:** <http://www.statelocalgov.net/index.cfm>

Local Government

Local governments perform the street-level work necessary to keep communities functioning. They provide service delivery to specific neighborhoods: fire and police protection, health, education, sanitation, maintenance, and parks and recreation.

The best local government opportunities will be found in larger, more diverse, and financially healthy units of government. These consist of large urban county governments, municipalities with populations over 100,000, and large school districts. Because local governments perform numerous functions similar to what

may be found in large organizations in the private sector, you may find such job opportunities: accountants, computer programmers, engineers, planners, employment specialists, architects, museum workers, and mid-level managers.

There is no single strategy for finding a local government position. In some places, for example, you look at job listings, apply for positions, and if qualified take a city civil service test. If you pass, your name will be added to a list of eligible candidates and stays there for a period of time unless you are hired. Many positions in city/borough/township government offices have standard applications for interested individuals to complete.

Research is the key to a successful job search campaign in local government. Locate the agencies and departments in which you are interested and contact them to learn about the application procedures. Look on-line to learn about local municipalities and their application processes. A few good places to look are:

govtjobs.com: <http://www.govtjobs.com/jobsourc.html#state>

State and Local Government on the Net: <http://www.statelocalgov.net/index.cfm>

Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/global/state/stategov.html>

Network as well; doing this can give you more information about the local hiring culture as well as names of people who have the power to hire. One of the best sources of networking leads is the telephone book for the area in which you are interested. The blue pages contain information on the municipal and county government agencies for that area. A local public library should also have information on file.

Peripheral Organizations

Many organizations are not part of the federal or state government system but work very closely with these governments in the public arena. These organizations range from

nonprofit foundations and charitable organizations to lobbyists, professional associations, and consulting firms. They may represent social or political groups, provide contractual services to government agencies, promote social programs, attempt to influence public policy, perform public functions, or promote political candidates. Some private organizations have government affairs offices that monitor legislative activities and the effects those activities may have on the organization. In effect, these peripheral organizations, while not part of the government system, are engaged in very public activities.

You can identify some of these groups at: <http://directory.google.com/Top/Society/Politics/Organizations/>

These organizations tend to be located in and around Washington, DC or the state capitals where they would have access to legislative and governmental offices. Many organizations are small, but offer quite extensive job responsibilities. As a job seeker, your job search will entail a great deal of networking and cold-calling.

Few of these organizations offer life-long opportunities because of their small size.

Some suggested reference materials to identify these organizations include:

- The Encyclopedia of Associations
- The Directory of National Trade and Professional Associations in the United States
- The Consultants and Consulting Organizations Directory
- The Foundation Directory
- Research Centers Directory

Capitol Hill

Compared to the number of employees of the federal government, the number of people employed on Capitol Hill is relatively small. Still, though, Capitol Hill offers a variety of exciting opportunities in assisting

senators and representatives in researching and writing bills, answering constituent inquiries, and offering advice (based on extensive research) to these legislators on issues currently facing Congress. Also, because the working conditions are often stressful and faced paced, turnover hovers around 40% annually.

Opportunities on the Hill can be found in legislative agencies such as the General Accounting Office and the Library of Congress, on personal staffs of members of Congress, and in the judicial system. The job search for each of these areas differs, though each relies heavily on networking and “pounding the pavement.”

Legislative agencies provide information for decision-making and dissemination purposes, and monitor actions of executive agencies. These agencies generally follow recruitment procedures similar to those of executive agencies with position announcements, application forms, testing, eligibility lists, etc. The legislative branch, though, operates under its own rules, classifications, and salaries. As each legislative agency recruits its own personnel, you will need to contact each agency to learn about its particular selection procedures.

Congressional offices, committees, and subcommittees offer hundreds of opportunities. In fact, there are over 500 federal congressional staffs and over 300 committees and subcommittees. Personal congressional staffs offer opportunities both in Washington and in home districts. While not on “the Hill,” there are similar opportunities in state congressional offices, committees and subcommittees (see section on state legislative jobs).

If you are interested in working in congressional and committee offices, the job search is much less structured. It will involve knocking on doors, making personal contacts, networking and a great deal of persistence and luck. Competition is fierce. Often the best time for a job search is immediately following an election, but personal contact will be important as you will be competing with all those

individuals who lost their positions due to the election.

Both the House and the Senate have placement offices:

Senate Placement Office

Room SH-142 — Hart Senate Bldg
Washington, DC 20150
202/224-9167
Job line: 202/228-5627

House Placement Office

Office of Human Resources
352 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6610
Fax: 202-226-7514
<http://www.house.gov/cao-hr/>
Job line: 202/225-2450

You may want to check out http://www.yourcongress.com/viewarticle.asp?article_ID=774 for some instruction on how to apply for a job in the Senate or House of Representatives.

The Judiciary offers fewer opportunities in the Washington, DC area but quite a few across the U.S. Most positions are for legal specialists and administrative support staff and require formal legal training, law degrees, and bar certification. Most job vacancies tend to be announced through word-of-mouth.

Check out jobs with the U.S. Federal Judiciary at <http://www.uscourts.gov/employment/vacancies.html>

Note: Not all of the Judiciary's employment opportunities are found here; other announcements may exist on each court's web site.

Two good printed resources for a job seeker are:

- Want's Federal-State Court Directory
- Directory of State Court Clerks and County Courthouses

Conclusion

“Working for the government” has quite a few different meanings as shown in this document. If you are considering this sector of the work world, your job search will entail research into the various options available to you. Combine formal and informal job search activities to conduct the best job search for this field.