Careers in Government

1. Explore Careers

Government jobs and internships cover a wide range of majors, from accounting to sociology. Check out these resources for information on specific positions and job categories that match best with your major.

- California Jobs by Major: bit.ly/californiajobsbymajor

2. Find a Job/Internship

JOB/INTERNSHIP BOARDS:

- CalOpps (California cities & counties): calopps.org
- City of San Jose: sanjoseca.gov/index.aspx?NID=708
- County of Santa Clara: governmentjobs.com/careers/santaclara
- Nationwide USA: usajobs.gov, usajobs.gov/studentsandgrads
- Departments not on USA Jobs: bit.ly/usajobsfederalcareerpaths
- Education: edjoin.org, higheredjobs.com
- HACU National Internship Program: hacu.net/hacu/HNIP.asp
- Washington Center Internship Program: twc.edu/internships
- Local Government Management Fellowship (MPA students only): icma.org/lgmf

TIPS:

- Create a search agent. This allows you to be notified through email when an opportunity in your search criteria opens up. USA Jobs, EdJoin, and HigherEdJobs support this feature.
- Narrow down your search criteria. Federal jobs follow a general schedule grade criteria, which separates jobs by levels. Use the Advanced Search on USAJobs and select the correct pay grade.
  - GS-5: Bachelor’s degree or 4 academic years above high school leading to bachelor’s degree
  - GS-7: Bachelor’s degree with class standing in upper 1/3 or 3.0+ GPA/3.5+ major GPA or honor society membership
  - GS-9: Master’s degree or equivalent
  - GS-11: Doctorate degree or J.D.
- Apply only for fitting positions. Check for education and experience requirements to make sure you qualify. Read the job announcement and application process carefully to make sure you are not missing any vital information.
- Get experience early. Once you have gotten your first job or internship, you qualify for internal recruitments. This gives you priority over other applicants. Many internships can also be noncompetitively converted to a permanent position. Federal employees who have worked over 3 years qualify for jobs only open to status applicants.

3. Resumes

GUIDELINES:

- Length: More than 1 page
- Format: Chronological (most recent first)
- Content:
  - Heading: Name, Mailing Address, Phone Number, Email
  - Objective: Job Announcement Number, Title, Series, GS Grade
  - Education: College Name, City, State, Major, Semester Hours, GPA, Graduation Date, High School/GED
  - Coursework: Any Job-Related Courses or Certifications
  - Experience: Position Title, Employer, Address, Start and End Dates, Supervisor Name and Contact Information, Accomplishments, Salary, Hours
  - Skills: Self-Management (ex. resourceful), Functional (ex. critical thinking), Technical (ex. Excel), Languages (ex. English)
  - Awards: Honors, Special Accomplishments, Leadership, Publications
  - References: Contact Information of 3-5 individuals
TIPS:
- **Use the Resume Builder.** This template through USA Jobs makes sure that you are including all important information that they are looking for. It is more detailed and walks you through the resume writing process.
- **Know your audience.** Your resume may be read by a computer scanner, human resources personnel, hiring manager, and background investigation team. Make sure to include important information for each audience.
- **Identify keywords and qualifications.** Read the job description carefully and use it as a guideline to writing your resume. When applying for different jobs, tailor your accomplishment statements so that they match up as best as you can to the job description.
- **Use the STAR method - Situation, Task, Action, Result.** Tell a narrative about your experiences and how they relate to the position. Be specific in not only what you accomplished, but also how you accomplished it and what the outcome was.
- **Include all types of experience.** Internships, volunteer experience, and other types of experiences all qualify as experience. Even if your experience was not directly related to the opportunity you are applying for, consider if any of your duties fit under their job description.

### 4. Networking

Most government jobs are competitive service jobs, which means that the hiring process must follow civil service laws. This ensures that there is fair and open competition with selection based on the applicant’s qualifications. However, you can still utilize networking by conducting informational interviews. Join local organizations such as ICMA ([icma.org](http://icma.org)), the International City/County Management Association, and meet alumni to learn more about your field of interest.

Informational interviews are typically 30-minute conversations with a professional already working in the industry to gain insight on an occupation or company. These can be done in person, over the phone, or over email. Once you have connected with someone on doing an informational interview, prepare questions beforehand such as: How did you get into this career? What skills or experiences were most helpful in getting a job in the public sector? Be sure to always thank the person after the interview. You may also ask them to refer you to any opportunities they may know of in the specific field you are interested in.

### 5. Interviewing

**TIPS:**
1. **Prepare a conversation starter.** You will likely be asked why you are a good candidate for the position. Prepare a short elevator pitch that highlights your top qualifications.
2. **Make a connection.** Build a rapport with the interviewer by engaging him/her with thoughtful questions and answers.
3. **Be interested.** Show your interest in the position by relating your skills and career goals to specific qualifications.
4. **Prepare examples beforehand.** Like your resume, use the STAR method when asked behavioral questions. Review common behavioral questions beforehand and brainstorm examples based on your experiences. Practice out loud.
5. **Answer questions completely.** Do not be too brief in your responses - sell yourself!
6. **Follow up.** Send the interviewer a thank you note with a reiteration of your interest and top qualifications.

### 6. Receiving an Offer

**THINGS TO CONSIDER:**
- **Negotiation:** Always prepare for negotiation by doing your research. Check the salary range for the opening and negotiate within that range. Develop a valid argument for the reasoning behind your request, such as why you exceed the basic qualifications, proof of a current or competing salary, or higher cost of living. For California state government employment, you can check the State Worker Salary Database on sacbee.com for reference.
- **Student Loan Forgiveness:** If you are employed by the government at any level (federal, state, local, or tribal), you may qualify for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program. This program forgives the remaining balance on your direct loans after you have made 120 qualifying monthly payments. You need to work full-time (30+ hours), which can be separated into multiple employers over the course of your 120 payments. To determine your eligibility, fill out the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Employment Certification Form available online.