

# Finding a Federal Internship

Without a doubt, federal internships are the best way to get your foot in the door for a future government job. Internships are available for high school, college and graduate students, and are a great opportunity for students to learn about working in the public sector. Thousands of students work for our government each year, and you can too.

## Using USAJOBS.gov

USAJOBS.gov is the government's official careers website; the federal equivalent to monster.com. This is where you will find virtually all government job openings, complete with job descriptions and instructions for how to apply. Navigating USAJOBS.gov and understanding how to dissect a job vacancy announcement is extremely important to your federal internship search. Follow these steps to make the process easier:

- ★ **Create an account** on USAJOBS.gov. Having an account allows you to use the federal resume builder and create up to five customized federal resumes. An account also allows you to generate specific searches and have the results e-mailed to you automatically!
- ★ **Keyword search** is a great tool for narrowing down your results. When looking for internships, try searching for words that coincide with federal student programs such as "student temporary employment," "student career experience" or "internship."
- ★ **StudentJobs** webpage can be found from the homepage of USAJOBS.gov. This is a great starting point when searching for specific federal student programs. You can also take advantage of student resources, including the Federal Jobs by College Major list, on the StudentJobs page.
- ★ **Questions?** You should feel free to follow up directly with the human resources contact that is listed at the bottom of the "overview" section of each vacancy announcement. You can ask this contact for more information about the position as well as the hiring timeline.

**Important Note:** Agencies are not required to post all of their student opportunities on USAJOBS.gov. This means that USAJOBS does not serve as a comprehensive database of all student internships. Keep reading to discover more ways to find a federal internship!

### FUN FACTS

- ★ For most federal internships, you can submit a traditional resume without having to respond to any online assessments.
- ★ Federal student internships are considered non-competitive, meaning that agencies do not have to go through all of the steps required for hiring permanent employees.

### FIND AND APPLY FOR FEDERAL JOBS AND INTERNSHIPS ONLINE

**Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP)** positions are paid internships that can range from a summer job to a position that lasts as long as you are in school. STEP is similar to a traditional internship program and will allow you to gain valuable experience in a variety of fields!

**Student Career Experience Program (SCEP)** offers substantive internship experience with federal agencies. The work must be related to your area of study and requires the agency to have a formal commitment with your institution. Most positions are paid, and you may also receive academic credit. If you successfully complete 640 hours of work as a SCEP, you can be appointed to a permanent position without going through the traditional hiring process.



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## Using Agency Websites

Sometimes it pays to go straight to the source, especially if you're focusing your search on a limited number of agencies. All agencies will have a "Jobs," "Careers" or "Opportunities" tab on their websites. These webpages may provide special instructions or have more detailed information about fellowship, internship or co-op programs. Follow these tips to make searching on these sites easier:

- ★ **Employment Opportunities** is a tab featured on almost every federal agency's website. Clicking on the employment tab will often lead you to a page featuring student opportunities and internships. Agencies will list open student positions as well as information on how to apply.
- ★ **Search Function** can be used in a similar manner to the USAJOBS.gov keyword search. If an agency website is overwhelming to you, try a keyword search (often found in the top right corner of the site). Search for phrases like "student temporary employment" and "student career experience."
- ★ **Calling Human Resources** can be a very productive tactic if you are still lacking information on student programs after you complete your website research. Most agencies are happy to speak with you; just do your homework first and be polite when you call.

## Other Avenues to Federal Internships

**Career Fairs** are hosted by a variety of organizations, universities and specialized groups of working professionals, and can be a great way to meet agency human resources contacts. Check your local convention center calendars, scour the newspaper, look at career center websites for local colleges and universities and search "federal career days" online.

**Special Interest Sites** can be a helpful tool in narrowing down your search. If you are considering a specific profession, there may be sites already tailored to address your needs.

### PAY AND BENEFITS

- ★ Not all federal internships are created equal. While some internships are unpaid, others are paid and include a full benefits package!

### TIMELINE

- ★ If you are looking for a summer internship, you should start your search between **September/October** and **January**, to give yourself ample time to complete the application process. Also, keep in mind that internships requiring a high-level security clearance—for example, DOD, State, and the Intelligence Community—will have deadlines in early November to allow time for the security clearance process.

### FEDERAL RESUMES

- ★ Highlight relevant coursework.
- ★ Focus on the duties section of the vacancy announcement. You should cater your resume to reflect the keywords found in this section, and clearly demonstrate why you are the best candidate for the position.

### TIPS AND POINTERS

- ★ A lot of young jobseekers don't take time to perfect their application. Jump ahead of the competition by taking the time to have someone else proofread your application!
- ★ Federal internships are competitive and sometimes it takes time to hear back from an agency. However, if you haven't heard back from an agency, be proactive and contact them to inquire about the status of your application.