

If you are reading this, you are already a major step ahead of 75% of the other applicants for any federal government job or internship!

### What Is/Isn't a Federal Resume and when do I use one?

- A true Federal Resume is not the same as the 1-page resume that most career advisors and well-meaning parents will teach you to write. It is much longer; averaging between 2-5 pages
- The content is deeper and broader than you may be used to writing. Bullet points on federal resumes are basically mini behavioral interview questions on paper; conceptually built around a KSA (see below) describing your achievements in that area
- Each experience entry (aka Job Block) should ideally contain at least one Key Accomplishment (overarching success you had in that position) if you had one, but at minimum, each bullet point should show an achievement related to the requested KSA
- They are only used to apply to government *agency* jobs
- You would **not** need a "federal resume" to apply to a position with Congress, a think tank, or a federal contractor

### Learn All About KSAs and Make Them Work for You

KSAs (Knowledge, Skills and Abilities) are how government decides which candidates are the Best Qualified to be referred to a hiring manager.

- [The Importance of KSAs](#) - this website provides a detailed explanation of what KSAs are and gives examples of good ones and bad ones. This was written back when KSAs were more often written as essays than bullet points, but if you ignore the personal pronouns (I/me/my) in the examples, it does show you how to build good KSA bullets for your resume.
- Utilize the KSA Worksheet (linked on the main page) to help you write your bullet points
- Your resume should be tailored using the KSAs mentioned:
  - In the duties section of the vacancy announcement
  - On the application questionnaire (a preview of which can normally be found linked in the vacancy announcement)
  - And potentially in the PDF describing the [Job Series](#) of which the position is a part
- Visit ONET to read all about the Knowledge, Skills or Abilities you may have to draw from
  - [Knowledge](#)
  - [Skills](#)
  - [Abilities](#)

### Internship Resumes

When applying for a Federal *Internship* you usually have several options:

1. **Create your own federal resume** that you design yourself in Word and upload in PDF (see **Frank Federal** sample)
  - Internship postings often give very little in the way of KSAs (see above) to build bullet points around, so read the job description carefully to see what KSAs you can pull out of it
  - Don't worry too much about selecting the "right" KSAs and just give as much detail on your personal accomplishments and achievements as you can *OR*
  - Select KSAs that you feel will be important to the employer/position based on whatever the job description provides as well as your own sense of your strongest relevant skills
  - *Optional* items for your internship resume:
    - Qualifications Profile (QP) or Professional Summary - If you have a lot of relevant experience (you were in the workforce for a number of years before returning to obtain your MA), you may wish to start your resume with a Qualifications Profile or Professional Summary that highlights

your top 3-4 overarching skills/achievements as they directly relate to the employer's needs. Think of it as your elevator pitch on paper, but note, a QP is *not* an objective statement

- Helpful Details - Include some of the components that the USAJobs Resume Builder would have automatically prompted you to enter such as
  1. Hours worked per week,
  2. supervisor's name and contact information, etc...
- 2. **Use the Resume Builder** on USAJobs to create a resume in the style/format the government is most used to seeing (see below for more on this)
  - This is seldom required but some agencies/positions *require* interns to use the Resume Builder, so always read the application instructions in the vacancy announcement *carefully* to ensure that you have done as the agency has requested
- 3. **Go your own way** by uploading your standard 1-2 page non-federal resume
  - You will not even attempt to use KSAs but just send in what you have and hope for the best. While this is not ideal as it won't present you as well as option #1 or even option #2, this can work out just fine
  - *Not* recommended for applications to Intelligence Agencies and Excepted Service positions in general

### The USAJobs Resume Builder for Competitive/Civil Service Job Applications

If you are applying for a permanent or project position through USAJobs, you should *use the resume builder* provided by the website. USAJobs does give you the option to upload a resume instead of using the builder, and this is great for internships (see above), but if you are applying for a career position, the resume builder is preferred by federal HR.

- You can build and save up to five different resumes in your USAJobs account; if you need to make more, download and save an already submitted resume to your computer or the cloud so you can reference it should you be contacted about the position in the future
- The finished resume will typically be 3-5 pages long if printed
- As a recent college graduate, try not to go longer than 5 pages unless you have a significant amount of *truly relevant* experience (i.e. you worked for several years in an area directly related to the job you're applying for before going back to school to earn your MA)
- If you basically know what you want to do, you don't have to wait for the perfect position to be advertised. You can create a generic [Job Series](#) resume for a particular series position (E.g.: Read the PDF for an 0343 position and create a generic 0343 resume using the KSAs you find there. When a specific 0343 series job opens, tweak that generic 0343 resume to make sure the generic KSAs of the position align with the agency's specific needs).
- Once completed, your resume will look something like the **Fiona Federal** Sample Federal Resume for Competitive Service Jobs

### Excepted Service Resumes

- You will most likely *not* be applying on USAJobs (occasionally excepted positions are posted there, but their application and hiring process remains a bit different)
- You will probably not need to use the Resume Builder (unless the agency asks you to do so)
- You are unlikely to have either a job series description or an application questionnaire to source KSAs, so you will have to pull the KSAs from:
  - The job posting on the agency's website (which often doesn't say very much)
  - Skills and abilities you possess that you infer the employer will want (Oral Communication, Written Communication, Leadership and Supervision, Research, etc...) given the nature of the job duties
  - The agency's mission & vision statements and social media presence, which can tell you a lot about who is a good fit for them
- You may notice that the Frank Federal Sample Federal Resume for Excepted Services Positions is a bit more like a private sector resume than Fiona Federal's Resume Builder Resume, but it contains a comparable level of descriptive detail. It also tends to be 2-3 pages long rather than 3-5 pages long
  - *Optional* items for your Excepted Service Resume:

- Qualifications Profile (QP) or Professional Summary - If you have a lot of relevant experience (you were in the workforce for a number of years before returning to obtain your MA), you may wish to start your resume with a Qualifications Profile or Professional Summary that highlights your top 3-4 overarching skills/achievements as they directly relate to the employer's needs. Think of it as your elevator pitch on paper, but note, a QP is *not* an objective statement
- Helpful Details - Include some of the components that the USAJobs Resume Builder would have automatically prompted you to enter such as
  1. Hours worked per week,
  2. supervisor's name and contact information, etc...

## General Resume Resources

If you are interested in Intelligence Analysis positions: [Guide to Writing an IA Resume](#)

US Customs and Border Patrol has some very clear and concise guidance for writing federal resumes on its careers page. Note the similarities and differences between the content desired for the two positions; one agency, but two slightly different skills required:

- [CBPO Resume Aid](#)
- [BPA Resume Aid](#)

## Tailor Your Cover Letter to a Federal Job

Generally speaking, there is very little difference between a cover letter written for a government agency and any other kind of cover letter. You should always plan on showing your interest in/passion for the employer and the position, but in government jobs/internships, it can also be helpful to mention your personal dedication to public service and the goals/mission of the agency you are applying to. You can review the standard How to Write a Cover Letter handout (posted elsewhere on our careers pages) for more information. Additionally, the resources below may be of some use:

- [Writing a CIA Cover Letter](#)
- [The Federal Resume Guidebook](#) by Kathryn Troutman
- [Student's Federal Career Guide](#) by Kathryn Troutman and Paul Binkley
- [The Federal Resume Guide](#) by The National Archives and Records Administration