

Careers in Government

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The federal government is our nation's largest employer. Some 1.9 million civilians work for the federal government, and that workforce is in transition. According to U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) estimates, among all full-time permanent employees in the federal workforce as of October 2004, 58 percent of supervisory and 42 percent of non-supervisory workers will be eligible to retire by the end of FY 2010. This means there will be a great demand for employees to replace those who are leaving. Similar demographics are impacting state and local governments, who employ many more people than the federal government does.

For this reason, the US Government has been reaching out to colleges and universities to educate students about the wide variety of career opportunities in the public sector. There are careers for students from all academic majors. Government employees are scientists, engineers, administrators, economists, architects, writers, psychologists, artists, to mention a few. They work in all three branches of government - executive, legislative, judicial all over the country and the world. In fact, 84 percent of federal jobs are located outside the greater Washington D.C. area (*Partnership for Public Service*).

Exploring Government Careers

The best way to find jobs and internship opportunities in government is to identify agencies or entities (e.g., a state or township) that interest you and research the agency or entity as you would any company. To find specific opportunities, search the agency or entity website directly or use the job listing websites listed below. For links to agency websites organized by branch see <http://www.firstgov.gov/Agencies/federal.shtml>.

Several programs have been developed to make it easier for students to get experience working for the government. In some cases these programs also expedite the process for students to obtain permanent work.

Entry Level

- Federal Career Intern Program: www.opm.gov/careerintern/index.htm, entry-level two-year appointments with simplified hiring process. Can lead to regular civil service employment. Offered by individual agencies. To find Career Intern positions: <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/>, use keyword "career intern".
- Presidential Management Fellows Program: www.pmi.opm.gov, two-year program for students who have completed graduate school, and with demonstrated interest in public policy and management. Requires nomination from student's school. Can be converted to permanent positions.
- Dept of Defense Science, Mathematics and Research for Transformation (SMART) Scholarship: <http://www.asee.org/fellowships/smart/about.cfm>, financial assistance for undergraduate and graduate students in science, math and engineering. Requires internships and post-graduation employment with DoD.

Internship Programs

- The MIT Washington DC Internship Program: <http://web.mit.edu/summerwash/www/>, sponsored by the MIT Political Science Department: selected students attend a seminar on policymaking and obtain policy-related paid summer internships in Washington D.C.
- Student Educational Employment Program: www.opm.gov/employ/students/index.htm, enables students to get a part time job during the school year or a summer job. Within this program, MIT students are eligible for the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) which provides opportunities for exploration of work regardless of student's academic field of study. Find STEP Internships: <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/>, use keyword "STEP".
- US Office of Personnel Management (OPM) e-Scholar website: <http://www.studentjobs.gov/e-scholar.asp>, provides links to agency specific internships, fellowships, cooperative education and apprenticeships.
- Washington Center for Internships and Academic Affairs: www.twc.edu, places students in internships in the private, public and nonprofit sector in Washington D.C.
- Washington Semester: <http://www.washingtonsemester.com/>, offers 12 distinct programs that combine internships (many with federal agencies), seminars and a research project; through American University.
- The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities' National Internship Program: <http://www.hnip.net/>
- American Indian Science and Engineering Society Internship Program: <http://www.aises.org/highered/internships/>.
- Workforce Recruitment Program: <http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/brochures/wrp1.html>, federal internships for college students with disabilities.

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MIT and Local Resources

- The Institute Career Assistance Network: <http://alum.mit.edu/cs/ican/>: a good resource for finding and networking with MIT alums in government and locating potential internships and job leads.
- Blue Pages, Local Phone Book: check to see which federal agencies have offices in the Boston area.
- Departmental partnerships: find out if your academic department partners with federal sponsors in research, consulting or internship programs (e.g., see MIT Washington DC Internship Program: <http://web.mit.edu/summerwash/www/>).

Government Employment Resources

- <http://www.ourpublicservice.org/workforusa/> : Partnership for Public Service, Work for USA site: designed to help students learn about government work; useful links to agencies and job information.
- http://www.ourpublicservice.org/research/research_show.htm?doc_id=260717 : Partnership for Public Service report, “Where the Jobs Are: The Continuing Growth of Federal Job Opportunities”
- <http://www.bestplacetowork.org/> : 2005 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government Rankings.
- www.students.gov : official student gateway to government information including career development.
- www.firstgov.gov : official US gateway to all government information on the Internet.
- http://www.firstgov.gov/Agencies/Federal/All_Agencies/index.shtml : alphabetical listing of federal agencies/depts.
- http://www.firstgov.gov/Agencies/State_and_Territories.shtml : listing of state government websites.
- www.foreignservicecareers.gov : opportunities in Foreign Service, through the State Department.
- <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/gmanual/index.html> : *The United States Government Manual*.
- www.opm.gov/forms/pdfimage/of0510.pdf : application form for federal jobs.

Salaries and Careers

Federal: Entry-level positions in the federal government may pay less than comparable private sector positions, but there are offsetting advantages: the benefits are broad and substantial, many federal jobs offer college loan repayment assistance, and advancement can be rapid and lucrative. Many government employees move around to different agencies, taking on greater responsibilities as their interests and skills expand. Ongoing employment is generally more secure than for private sector jobs and tenure tends to be longer term. *State and local*: Salaries and careers for state and local employees vary widely – see their websites for more information.

- <http://www.opm.gov/oca/payrates/> : Office of Personnel Management, salaries and wages.
- <http://www.opm.gov/oca/pay/studentloan/index.asp> : information on loan repayment assistance.
- <http://web.mit.edu/career/www/infostats/graduation.html> : MIT Careers Office Graduating Student Survey.
- <http://www.salary.com> : Salary.Com online salary calculator.

Job/Internship Listings

- www.usajobs.opm.gov : by law, all government agencies must post vacancies open to outside applicants on this website, updated on a daily basis.
- www.studentjobs.gov : opportunities in federal government for students, recent graduates.
- www.federaljobs.net : opportunities in federal government, resource material.
- http://www.governmentguide.com/benefits_and_assistance/jobcenter.adp : opportunities at all levels of government.
- www.govtjobs.com : public sector opportunities – federal, state, county, city, nonprofits.
- www.govtjob.net : opportunities in state and local governments.
- www.statejobs.com/gov.html : opportunities in state governments.
- www.monstertrak.com : select “Jobs & Internships”; under “Job Category” select “Government and Policy”.
- <http://www.ourpublicservice.org/info-url3743/info-url.htm> : internships in the Federal Government.

Written Resources

- *Guide to America’s Federal Jobs: A Complete Directory of Federal Career Opportunities*, 3rd ed., Jist Works, December 2005 (Dewey library call number: JK692.G85 2005).
- *Federal Jobs: The Ultimate Guide*, 3rd ed., Dana Morgan, Robert Goldenkoff, Arco, June 2002 (2nd edition available at Dewey library, call number JK716.M67 1997).
- *The Book of U.S. Government Jobs: Where They Are, What’s Available and How to Get One*, 8th ed., Dennis V. Damp, Bookhaven Press, June 2002.
- *Red White and Blue Jobs Library*, Partnership for Public Service, download at <http://www.ourpublicservice.org> or http://www.ourpublicservice.org/info-url3739/info-url_show.htm?doc_id=148734.
- *Governing Magazine, for States and Localities*, monthly magazine, www.governing.com.