



UNDERSTANDING THE FEDERAL JOB APPLICATION PROCESS

CREATING A FEDERAL RESUME

Unlike the one-size-fits-all world of private sector resume writing, the federal application process requires applicants to build their resume in accordance with each job for which they apply. Federal resumes require more detail than standard resumes and can be several pages long for a person with significant work experience. This guide was created to help you create your federal resume.

Once you review the job's qualification requirements and draft responses to the KSA requirements, you will need to create (or in some cases finalize) the resume you will submit with your application via USAJOBS.

To make the process of compiling a federal resume a bit simpler, you can use the step-by-step resume builder in USAJOBS. Doing so will also help streamline your online job applications later. You may create and store up to five resumes on USAJOBS.

ADDRESSING KSAS

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs) are an important part of the federal application process. These are the unique requirements that the hiring agency wants to find in the person selected to fill a particular job. Some agencies will list the KSAs in the "Qualifications & Evaluations" or the "How to Apply" sections of USAJOBS. Other agencies will require you to click on the "Apply Online" button (at the bottom of each page" in order to see the complete list of KSAs for the position.

A primary purpose of KSAs is to measure those qualities that will set one candidate apart from the others. Following are some tips on how to effectively respond to job qualification questions and highlight your KSAs in relation to job requirements:

- **Research**
It is very important to read the entire vacancy announcement before addressing its qualification requirements. Read the qualification requirements and related questions especially carefully, highlighting key words or phrases describing the position responsibilities so you remember to address those points in your responses.
- **Use your resume**
Go back to your resume and outline a list of experiences you've had that address each requirement/question. Review each list and select the items that best illustrate a link between your experience and each requirement as you compose your responses.
- **Go beyond your resume**
Add information relevant to each requirement/question that may not be included in your resume — such as any specialized experience, training, publications, leadership roles, special skills, accomplishments and/or recognition. Make sure you take credit for your entire range of skills, credentials and experiences.

- **Use examples**
Where applicable, write your responses in the first person, and use concrete examples to illustrate your skills and abilities. This is your opportunity to more fully elaborate on skills and responsibilities outlined in your resume, and examples are often much more compelling than simple assertions. In this regard, focus on any outcomes to which you directly contributed, citing quantitative data where possible. For example, use data that measures how much (like how much money or time you generated or saved), and/or point to positive change that resulted wherever possible.
- **Be concise**
Review your answers to ensure they are succinct and easy to read. Always use plain language and avoid acronyms. Focus on content, and don't forget to proofread to ensure your responses don't contain typos or grammatical errors.

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION AND SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

In addition to preparing your resume and addressing the qualification requirements for the position to which you are applying, you may also be asked for specific documentation to verify your level of education, certification in a particular profession or discipline, eligibility to receive veterans' preference in the selection process or others. Additional documentation requirements are typically spelled out in the "Overview" or "How to Apply" tabs of the job announcement.

Some of the more common types of documentation relate to college transcripts that verify receipt of a degree or special coursework, documentation verifying attainment of professional certification and documentation verifying veteran status. These materials must be sent as part of your application. In most cases, you will be able to mail or fax them separately if they are not accessible in an electronic file.

MONITORING YOUR APPLICATION

Due to the large number of applications usually received for a given job and the careful applicant review process that must be undertaken by federal agencies, the hiring process for federal jobs often takes several weeks or months to complete — especially if the position requires that a selected candidate undergo a background investigation and be granted a security clearance.

If you have applied online through an agency's automated system, sometimes you may be able to check the status of your application through USAJOBS or an agency hiring system. Alternatively, some organizations will contact you to notify you of your application status; this may be done by mail, e-mail or telephone. Again, carefully read the specific job announcement you are applying for to see what the instructions and procedures are. In addition, the job announcement will identify a point of contact for you, for questions about the application process.