

Federal Resume Guide

Introduction

Are you a current federal employee looking to move up the career ladder? Maybe you want to make a lateral move to another department or agency? Or perhaps you are seeking a transition from the private sector or active military service to the civilian workforce? Whatever your background, your federal resume will serve as the first step in advancing your career. It is your personal presentation and marketing piece to potential employers, and therefore critical to your future success. Your resume represents an opportunity to convey that you are both a confident and qualified individual, and deserve the position you are seeking. For this reason, it is important to invest enough time in your resume to ensure it is adequately planned and organized, and represents a superior product, i.e. you!

Overview of the Federal Hiring Process

[USAJOBS](#) is the U.S. Government's official system/program for Federal jobs and employment information. Open position listings within the Federal Government, i.e., vacancy announcements, are advertised on this website for at least two weeks. USAJOBS offers the option to upload an existing resume or use their *ResumeBuilder* tool to generate an entirely new resume. It is recommended that you use the *ResumeBuilder*, as some vacancy announcements may not accept an uploaded resume. USAJOBS will allow you to store up to five distinct resumes online.

Due to the volume of applications received for any given vacancy announcement within USAJobs, your resume will most likely be processed through an electronic filtering mechanism before reaching human hands. Your resume will also be ranked according to certain preferences (e.g., veterans, disability, etc.) and rated based on the extent and quality of your experience, education and training described in your online resume as it relates to the duties of the advertised position. **Due to this computerized ranking and rating system, it is essential that you tailor the experience listed on your federal resume to the specific position to which you are applying.**

For more information, consult the General Services Administration's page on getting the most out of USAJobs: <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/105310>

Once your application is rated, a quality review will be conducted by the Human Resources Department and/or Subject Matter Expert (SME). Resumes will then be forwarded to the Hiring Manager for interview consideration. Once a hiring decision has been made, applicants will be notified and debriefs will be offered to those who interviewed but did not receive the position.

The Importance of the Federal Resume

In the private sector, resumes are tailored to illustrate a wide variety of skills and abilities in hopes of getting a candidates' foot in the door and obtaining an interview. They are used to create a good first impression and generate general interest. This is not the case for federal resumes. The federal resume's sole purpose is to demonstrate that you possess the necessary qualifications for the position. You must show in your writing that you meet eligibility requirements and are the best candidate for the position, as more often than not a decision-panel designates their primary candidate for a vacancy before an interview even takes place. If

you qualify for hiring preferences such as disability or veteran status, make sure to mention this on your federal resume. If you don't include something on your resume, you may never get the chance to mention it!

Additionally, a federal resume should be very detail-oriented, going into great depth about your skills and accomplishments. For this reason, federal resumes are generally longer (2-5 pages) than private sector resumes. Federal Resumes also contain more personal information than would be found in their private sector counterparts.

Federal Resume Myths

There are many philosophies surrounding resume writing techniques. Before approaching the task of writing a quality resume, let's review some common misconceptions surrounding the process.

Your resume must be one page long.

Myth – While a one-page limit may be required for a private sector resume, a good federal resume will be substantially longer. Federal resumes are more detailed than standard resumes. In order to effectively detail your skills, past duties, and accomplishments, a range of 2-5 pages is acceptable. Although you have the opportunity to include more information, it is important to be clear and concise. Avoid rambling...longer is not always better.

The Feds can translate my private sector resume into their format.

Myth – Federal resumes require specific information that is often not included on private sector resumes. If you do not include this information, you may prevent yourself from being considered. While you can use your current resume as a starting point for your federal resume, it is important to draft an entirely new resume.

I can use the same resume for multiple vacancy announcement applications.

Myth – Using the same resume to apply for several Federal jobs is a recipe for disaster. Human Resources Specialists, as well as computer filtering mechanisms, pay particular attention to the inclusion of specific key words and phrases from the job announcement in your resume. Furthermore, each application should include a resume carefully tailored to the specific position for which you are applying, to ensure you exhibit the necessary qualifications.

My resume isn't all that great, but my interviewing skills will "WOW" any recruiter.

Myth-Unless your resume satisfies certain requirements, you will not move on to another part of the hiring process. Do not count on making up for inadequacies in an interview; your resume must represent the best product possible.

Resume Writing Mindset

Before you begin, it may be helpful to compile all the information you want to include in your resume. The writing process will be much more efficient and fluid this way, and it will ensure you don't forget to include anything.

It is important to thoroughly review the vacancy announcement for the position you are seeking. You will be tailoring your resume to this information and are strongly advised to use similar language in your writing.

Make sure to include important keywords and specific phrases from the announcement in your resume, as human resources will expect to see them. It is also essential that your resume addresses every qualification.

You may find it helpful to research the specific agency's mission statement and operational structure to better understand what anyone attempting to fill the position will be looking for.

Federal resumes follow a similar format to traditional resumes. A conservative, 12-point font is recommended, as well as 1-inch margins. Bolding headers and breaking up chunks of text with bullets to showcase specific items will go a long way in making your resume aesthetically pleasing and easy to read. Because your resume will initially be skimmed, it is important that it remains streamlined and lacks clutter to ensure you convey as much information as possible.

What is generally included in a Federal Resume?

A federal resume calls for some information that is not generally required on a standard resume, and not including such information may immediately disqualify you from consideration. It is extremely important that you carefully read application instructions and include all required information. Below is a description of what most federal resumes will require, though individual agencies may choose to require additional information.

Personal Information: You should include your full name, mailing address, email address, and day and evening phone numbers. It is also necessary to include your country of citizenship, veteran's preference points (if eligible), and the highest Federal civilian grade you have held. If the specific agency you are applying to requests your social security number be sure to include it, but it is not advisable to include it on generic resumes that anyone can see.

Ex:

<p style="text-align: center;">Joseph W. Friday 1234 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008 Cell: (555) 555-4321 Evening: (555) 555-1234 jwfriday007@email.com Country of Citizenship: United States Social Security #: 123-45-6789 Veteran's Preferences: N/A Federal Civilian Status: N/A</p> <hr/>
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Job Description/Objective: Unique to federal resumes, you are required to include the announcement number, title, series and grade of the job to which you are applying. This can be found on the vacancy announcement.

Ex:

Field Staff Law Enforcement Ranger, BLM, Announcement: NV-DEU-2007-0034, GS 1801-07/11
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Skills Summary: This is an opportunity to immediately highlight the fact that you are a qualified candidate. In detail, list your qualifications that pertain to the vacancy announcement. Remember to use key words! Feel free to include qualifications and accomplishments that do

not directly pertain to the specific position but which you wish to highlight (though primary importance should be placed on the required qualifications).

Ex:

- **Research: legislative, newspaper, Internet, international, Library of Congress and the Congressional Research Service**
- **Writing & Editing: reports, correspondence, emails, PowerPoints, web content, newspaper articles, newsletter content**
- **Project coordination: compiling information, planning and coordinating completion, tracking status, follow-up, and managing details**
- **Languages: Communicate in American Sign Language and Costa Rica Sign Language;**
- **Read and Write in English and Spanish**
- Computer skills: Microsoft Suite: Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel; Keyboard 50 wpm

Work Experience: Relevant experience from the past decade should be in chronological order (with the most recent first). For each job, include your title, your employer's name and address, supervisor's name and phone number, and whether they may be contacted. Also be sure to include your starting and ending dates (as specific as possible), the hours per week you worked, and the salary you received. First, write a brief summary of your roles and duties as a job description. However, the majority of your writing should be concerned with describing your accomplishments. Be sure to quantify the impact of your accomplishments, and how they are relevant to the job you are applying for.

Ex:

Law Firm of Adams and Jones

1200 19th Street, NE, Washington, DC 20009

Investigator/Paralegal

September 2007 – Present

Assist firm in criminal investigation and litigation.

Salary: \$27,000/year (June 2008 – Present), \$12.50/hour (September 2007 – May 2008)

Hours: 40/week (June 2008 – Present), 20-30/week (September 2007 – May 2008)

Supervisor: John Adams

TelePhone: 202-979-5566

Employer may be contacted

Position:

- Gather and investigate pertinent information related to litigation proceedings of firm
- Work in conjunction with FBI and other law enforcement agencies to collect evidence for criminal and civil litigation
- Take pictures of crime scenes, gather facts, and analyze data for case preparation
- Interview inmates within DC jail in preparation for trial
- Conduct research into relevant case law looking for precedent and pertinent statutes
- Prepare legal documents, reports, and exhibits
- Draft and serve subpoenas

Education: List the name, city, and state of any institution you have attended, even if you did not complete the program/degree. For degrees that you did obtain, include the major and type. Don't forget to include your high school diploma or GED. Consider listing your achieved GPA if it is above 3.0.

Ex:**American University, Washington, DC 20016**

Bachelor of Arts, Justice, magna cum laude

May 2008

Minors: Language/Area Studies: France; Language/Area Studies: Japan

Academic: GPA: 3.7/4.0

Academic Honors: Deans List (6 of 8 semesters)

Honor Society Membership: Phi Kappa Phi

Relevant Coursework:

Introduction to Justice Research (used SPSS and other research methods to write a 15-page paper on the history of the FBI in relation to its employment practices); Analysis of the Executive Branch (wrote a 20- page paper on the political relationship between the FBI and the Executive branch); Crime Prevention;

Comparative Systems of Law & Justice

University of Tokyo, Tokyo, 183-8534, Japan

AU Study Abroad,

January 2007 – May 2007

Other Qualifications: Before you are done, make sure to include anything else you feel will make you an appealing candidate for the position. Be sure to include any honors you have received, particularly performance awards or designation of special projects. Also include any job-related training courses you have completed, relevant certificates or licenses you have obtained, or publications you have authored.

Be sure to also include any leadership activities or community involvement and list memberships in professional or honor societies, public speaking engagements, and community service.

When it comes to including religious or political activities in this section, it is important to keep discretion in mind. If your involvement in such organizations will showcase leadership ability or other positive qualifications, feel free to include them. On the other hand, it is important to balance the fact that involvement in certain organizations may not appeal to some of those who are reviewing your resume. If you do decide to include such activities, try and use general language to avoid any potential controversy.

Ex:**Other Qualifications:**

- Staff Writer, The Eagle (AU Student Newspaper), 2005 – 2006
- Residence Hall Representative, AU Student Senate, 2004 – 2006
- Chairperson, AU Toy Drive, 2005
- As student project lead, independently organized campaign to collect over 2,000 new and gently used toys to relieve toy shortage for the kids and adolescents at Children's Hospital in Washington, DC
- Received Community Service Award for 2005-2006 from AU Student Government
- AU Outdoors Club, 2005 - 2008

Framing Accomplishments using the CCAR Method:

When it comes to detailing problems you have overcome or positive change you have enacted in your work experience, it may be helpful to utilize the **CCAR** (Challenge, Context, Action, and Result) format. This is a storytelling model that allows you to showcase your leadership ability. There are four components:

Challenge: What change were you trying to direct? What problems needed to be fixed?

Context: Describe the situational background. Describe the individuals and groups you worked with, and/or the environment in which you worked. Who, what, when, where, and why?

Action: What steps did you take to effect the change or produce results?

Result: What measurable results were achieved? Describe the impact of your leadership.

After ensuring you have all parts of the model, it is possible to combine each aspect into a single, dynamic statement.

Tips for writing a strong resume:

- 1) Check resume for misspellings or grammatical errors.
- 2) Translate acronyms or technical jargon.
- 3) Avoid including personal belief or philosophies.
- 4) While it is acceptable to include relevant work experience from more than 10 years ago, it is recommended that you focus primarily on the previous decade.
- 5) Make sure to have your resume peer-reviewed. You'd be surprised what mistakes can be caught or insights given by a pair of fresh eyes. When in doubt, ask for advice!
- 6) Use an active voice. For example, "Managed office of 20 employees" is better than, "Was responsible for office management."
- 7) Remain clear and concise. Wordy or irrelevant information will serve to confuse the reader and clutter your resume.
- 8) Use action words such as "managed", "coordinated" or "supervised".
- 9) Strengthen your application by including quantitative data- make mention of specific numbers and data such as the number of people you have managed or the percentage by which you increased revenue.

Conclusion

Your resume is an integral part of any career advancement you hope to achieve. We hope that you have learned not only to differentiate between a private sector and federal resume, but also to create a product that effectively portrays both your accomplishments and qualifications. Applying for a Federal job may seem daunting at first, but we hope this guide has presented you with the knowledge and ability to obtain the vacancy you seek.

Sample Resume 1

Uncle Sam

1111 Career Place
Job Center, Maryland 20502
Business: 301-123-1111 – Residence: 301-123-5555

Country of citizenship: United States of America
Veterans' Preference: No
Highest Grade: GS-0201-13, 10/2005-Present
Contact Current Employer: Yes

AVAILABILITY

Job Type: Permanent
Work Schedule: Full Time

DESIRED LOCATIONS

US-MD-Montgomery County

WORK EXPERIENCE

National Institutes of Health

National Cancer Institute
6130 Executive Blvd., Room 4296
Bethesda, MD 20892

Supervisor: David Marshall (301) 444-1111 (Permission to contact)

Dates: 10/05 – Present

Grade Level: GS-13

Salary: \$100,904

Hours Per Week: 40

- Serve as Program Manager overseeing an \$8,000,000 contract, with two locations, 7 Federal and 12 contract employees
- Manage a staff of four Program Analysts and three Program Assistants
- Advise Administrative Officers on program issues including grant funding, policies, and procedures
- Counsel grantees on grant questions and concerns
- Present over 30 grant writing workshops to grantees and staff per year
- Developed a grant writing training manual that has been used as a model by other departments within NCI
- Manage 45 grantees and 125 grants with a total budget of \$40,000,000
- Coordinate with Program Directors and Administrative Officers on the allocation of grant funding
- Instruct NIH Grant Writing Basic Course and NIH Grant Writing Advanced Course

National Institutes of Health

National Cancer Institute
6130 Executive Blvd., Room
Bethesda, MD 20892

Supervisor: Howard Gordon (301) 444-3333 (Permission to contact)

Dates: 6/93 – 9/05

Grade Level: GS-11

Salary: \$52,027

Hours Per Week: 40

- Served as Project Officer for \$2,000,000 contract
- Coordinated award pay and bonuses for NCI
- Advised NCI Managers on personnel actions
- Provided reports to internal customers, senior level managers, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Office of Personnel Management

- Coached, motivated, and supervised three employees to provide exceptional customer service
- Presented workshops on personnel management and contract management
- Created and maintained multiple databases on benefits, payroll, and personnel actions

National Institutes of Health

National Cancer Institute
 6130 Executive Blvd., Room 3535
 Bethesda, MD 20892

Supervisor: Tony Stevens (301) 444-1212 (Permission to contact)

Dates: 7/90 – 5/93
Grade Level: GS-09
Salary: \$30,567
Hours Per Week: 40

- Served as Program Analyst advising and counseling NCI employees on personnel questions and issues
- Reviewed, analyzed, and evaluated the NCI extramural program
- Developed program goals and policies
- Responsible for all recruit actions within the department
- Supervised two stay in school students and one secretary
- Provided program support in the areas of personnel management, administration and budget
- Maintained performance appraisal system for the Institute
- Developed standard performance elements for NCI positions
- Trained and advised the administrative officers on personnel and policy issues

EDUCATION

- Master of Business Administration, Georgetown Univ., Washington, DC 2001
- Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Univ., of Richmond, Richmond, VA1990 (GPA - 3.6)

JOB RELATED TRAINING

- Managing Multiple Projects, American Management Association 2002
- Project Management, American Management Association 2001
- Administrative Office Management, USDA Graduate School 1999
- Federal Government Grant Writing, USDA Graduate School 1997
- Personnel Actions and Personnel Management Course, USDA Graduate School 1995
- Staffing and Placement, USDA Graduate School 1995

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Excellence in Management (NCI) 2001
- NCI Director’s award for Excellence in Extramural Program Development 1999 & 2001
- Received outstanding performance appraisal 1990-Present
- NCI Outstanding Leader Award 1996 & 1999

AFFILIATIONS

- Coach – Girls Softball (ages 10 –12) Rockville, MD 1998-Present
- Coordinate fundraisers and manage the softball league’s finances

COMMITTEES/ORGANIZATIONS

- NIH Human Resources Consolidation Committee 2002
- NCI Human Resources Computer Research Team 1999-2001

Sample Resume 2

Michael Cavalier

1234 Any Lane | Berkeley, CA | 94720 | Mobile: 415.555.5555 | michael.cavalier@gmail.com

JOB TITLE

Economist, 0110-16

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT NUMBER: 12-923009-DB

Veteran's Preference: N/A | Federal Civilian Status: N/A | Country of Citizenship: USA

WORK EXPERIENCE

Federal Reserve Board of the Bay Area | Oakland, CA

6/2011 - Present

Senior Examiner

- Supported the development and execution of effective supervision programs for evaluating market and liquidity risk consistent with bank standards and expectations
- Monitored issues, trends, and developments through the review of internal risk management reports, regulatory filings, regulatory surveillance results, regulatory examination reports and work papers
- Documented analysis of financial and business issues which highlighted emerging issues and trends that warranted further review
- Supported the supervision and coordination of examination and inspection activities
- Oversaw on-site inspections and examination activities and assessed findings, conclusions, and recommended ratings
- Coordinated examination and inspection activities to ensure objectives and deadlines were met in accordance with bank standards and expectations
- Developed and sustained sound working relationships with domestic and foreign regulators by using communication, teamwork, and influencing skills to ensure appropriate leverage of their work in support of the overall supervisory program

USA Financial Services | Palo Alto, CA

9/2007 – 9/2009

Wealth Management Personal Trust Relationship Manager

- Acted as an administrator of trust accounts for high net worth clients where the bank acts as a trustee, executor, administrator, conservator, guardian, depositor, or agent
- Provided expert advice and counsel related to personal trust product and services
- Administered accounts in a manner that ensured compliance with legal requirements and business lines policies and procedures
- Managed the development and sustainability of client relationships for Wealth Management

Brown Brothers Harriman | Denver, CO

7/2006 – 9/2007

Compliance Analyst, Investor Services

- Monitored compliance requirements for funds daily utilizing Charles River Development ComplianceMaster system
- Prepared monthly and quarterly compliance reports which included solutions to compliance issues published in the Quarterly Board Reports
- Assisted Compliance Business Analyst with ComplianceMaster rule-writing
- Completed review of daily, weekly, monthly, and quarterly compliance reporting for staff analyst

EDUCATION

- Graduate School of Business, University of Southern Los Angeles | Los Angeles, CA
- **Masters of Business Administration** May 2011

- University of Los Angeles | Los Angeles, CA
- **Bachelor of Science, Applied Mathematics** May 2006
- **Bachelor of Arts, Chicana and Chicano Studies** May 2006

LICENSES

- FINRA Series 7, 24, and 63

References

<http://www.archives.gov/careers/jobs/forms/resume-guide.pdf>

<http://images.military.com/ContentFiles/FedResHandbook.pdf>

http://www.amazon.com/Federal-Resume-Guidebook-Promoted-Government/dp/1563709252#reader_1563709252

<http://www.fda.gov/downloads/AboutFDA/WorkingatFDA/UCM279014.pdf>

http://dmna.ny.gov/jobs/fed_res_guide.pdf

http://www.nps.gov/training/tel/Guides/Federal_Resume_pg_20060407.pdf

<http://www.sc.edu/career/Pdf/federalresume.pdf>

<http://tsacareercoaching.tsa.dhs.gov/index.php/federal-applications-part-3/>

<http://www.fedsmith.com/2011/01/03/avoid-these-common-pitfalls-your-federal/>

<https://american.edu/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&pageid=153959>

<http://oamp.od.nih.gov/division/saps/SAS10/Present/SampleFR.pdf>

http://www.sec.gov/jobs/jobs_sampleres.shtml