

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Pathways Toolkit for Hiring Managers and Supervisors

A Guide to Hiring Students and Recent Graduates



INTRODUCTION

The Pathways Toolkit for Hiring Managers and Supervisors (Toolkit) is designed to:

- Introduce you, the hiring manager and/or supervisor, to the Pathways Programs (Programs);
- Help you to determine which of the three programs—the Internship Program, Recent Graduates Program or Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program—will best meet your hiring needs;
- Show you how to recruit and hire a student or recent graduate through the Programs; and
- Highlight your role in helping participants to fulfill the requirements of the Programs.

The information in this Toolkit reflects government-wide policies and information related to the Programs. Depending on your agency, your role in implementing the Programs may vary. Please review your agency-specific policies and consult with your Pathways Programs Officer (PPO) and Human Resources (HR) Specialist for more details about these initiatives, which may be referred to differently at agencies across government.

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PROGRAM OVERVIEWS

Established by [Executive Order 13562](#), “Recruiting and Hiring Students and Recent Graduates,” the Pathways Programs (Programs) were designed to help agencies recruit and hire well-qualified students and recent graduates by streamlining processes and providing applicants with clear paths to internships and full-time employment, as well as meaningful training, mentoring and career-development opportunities.

Comprised of the Internship Program, Recent Graduates Program and Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program, the Programs assist agencies in attracting talent and filling key competency gaps. Along with the government-wide initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion, and bring talented veterans on board, the Programs support agencies’ efforts to fill workforce needs, and infuse the federal space with new enthusiasm, talent and unique perspectives.

Please use the following information to help determine which of the three Programs will best meet your hiring needs.

Internship Program

- **WHO:** Students who are currently enrolled in or accepted for enrollment in a [qualifying educational institution](#).
- **WHAT:** Paid opportunities for students to work in federal agencies and explore career paths related to their academic field of study or career interests, as well as become eligible for non-competitive conversion to a permanent position in the civil service.
- **WHY:** Learn about students’ competencies, skills and fit before hiring them into permanent positions, and meet both your temporary and long-term hiring needs.

Please [click here](#) for more information about the Internship Program.

Recent Graduates Program

- **WHO:** Individuals who have received a degree or certificate from a [qualifying educational institution](#) within the previous two years.
 - Please note that veterans who were unable to apply to the Program within two years of receiving their degree due to military service obligations have up to six years to apply to the Program after degree completion.
- **WHAT:** A dynamic, one-year developmental program designed to promote careers in the civil service to recent graduates, in part, by providing participants with the opportunity to become eligible for non-competitive conversion to a permanent position in the civil service.
- **WHY:** During their participation in this structured developmental program, learn about Recent Graduates’ competencies, skills and fit before hiring them into permanent positions.

Please [click here](#) for more information about the Recent Graduates Program.

Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program

- **WHO:** Individuals who are in their final year of graduate school and who are scheduled to complete their academic requirements by August 31 of the academic year in which the competition is held, as well as individuals who have received an advanced degree from a [qualifying educational institution](#) within the previous two years.

- **WHAT:** The federal government's premier, two-year leadership development program for advanced degree recipients who demonstrate academic excellence, possess management and leadership potential, and have a clear interest in and commitment to public service. It provides participants with the opportunity to become eligible for non-competitive conversion to a permanent position in the civil service.
- **WHY:** Participants in this flagship leadership development program for advanced degree recipients have already gone through a rigorous assessment process sponsored by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and can typically be placed in higher entry-level positions after you have had the opportunity to learn about their competencies, skills and fit.

Please [click here](#) for more information about the PMF Program.

GENERAL INFORMATION

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

While each of the three Pathways Programs (Programs) is unique, there are a number of elements that are common among these initiatives. This section addresses and provides more details about these cross-cutting features.

Agency Workforce Planning

With 30 percent of permanent career employees in the federal workforce eligible to retire by 2017¹, agencies must actively utilize workforce planning to build their talent pipelines from a variety of sources and ensure that they can fill critical positions. The Programs are one tool to aid you and your agency in meeting your workforce planning goals.

Your workforce plan should ultimately provide a clear picture of your mission and priorities, goals and targets, and your capacity to achieve results with your team. The Programs can assist you in recruiting and hiring individuals with the knowledge, skills and abilities that you need, both now and in the future. By allowing you to bring in individuals for term-limited appointments, the Programs provide you with an opportunity to evaluate candidates and determine their fit before hiring them into permanent positions. Prior to filling any jobs under the Programs, you should ensure that there is an adequate number of available permanent positions into which you can convert eligible participants.

Position Classification

All federal positions are assigned to a pay system, series, title and grade based on consistent application of position classification standards. Effectively classifying positions will assist you in establishing an efficient and cost-conscious organizational structure.

Interns² whose positions fall under the General Schedule (GS) or a comparable pay system must be classified as student trainees, in the xx99 series of the appropriate occupational group. Interns whose positions fall under the Federal Wage System (FWS) must be classified as student trainees, in the xx01 series of the appropriate occupational group.

For Recent Graduates and Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) positions, please use the Office of Personnel Management position classification standards.

Memorandum of Understanding

Each agency must sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) prior to utilizing the Programs. This document, which is renewed every two years, outlines how an agency will administer the Programs (e.g., accepting applications and assessing candidates).

¹ Robert Goldenkoff, "Federal Workforce: Recent Trends in Federal Civilian Employment and Compensation," *U.S. Government Accountability Office*, <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-14-215>, (accessed June 19, 2015).

² "Interns," as used in this Toolkit, refers to longer term, indefinite Interns. "Interns NTE," as used in this Toolkit, refers to temporary Interns. All mentions of participants in the Internship Program will make reference to either Interns and/or Interns NTE.

Benefits

Health and life insurance coverage for participants in the Programs depends on the type of Pathways appointment and the expectation of substantial employment during the year.

Students hired under an Internship, Recent Graduates or PMF appointment for a period expected to last longer than one year are eligible for health and life insurance coverage, so long as they are also expected to be in a pay status for at least one-third of the total period of time from the date of their initial appointment to the date of completion of the Program. The cost of premiums is split between the employee and the agency, as is the case for all permanent employees.

When an employee on a temporary appointment has, a seasonal schedule of less than six months per year, or an intermittent schedule and is expected to work 130 hours per month or more for at least 90 days, the employee is eligible to enroll in an FEHB plan and receive the same government contribution as full-time permanent employees. These newly eligible employees will receive the same government contribution as full-time permanent employees.

Trial Period

Individual agencies determine whether the duration of Internship appointments in the excepted service is counted as a trial period. It is recommended that agencies recognize the time spent under Internship appointments as a trial period when Interns are converted to the competitive service within the same agency, in the same line of work and without a break in service. Time spent in the Internship Program is creditable toward the probationary period upon conversion to the competitive service.

Across government, the duration of Recent Graduates and PMF appointments in the excepted service is counted as a trial period.

Reporting Requirements

In conjunction with workforce planning activities, agencies are required by OPM to report annually all positions that they intend to fill during the upcoming fiscal year, and have filled during the past fiscal year, to include conversions and separations, for each Pathways Program.

RECRUITMENT AND OUTREACH

Public Notification

The [Pathways regulations](#) require all Internship and Recent Graduates opportunities to be posted on [USAJOBS](#) through an announcement or advertisement, as appropriate. (OPM itself posts a Presidential Management Fellows job opportunity announcement.) This requirement promotes fairness, transparency and compliance with the [Merit System Principles](#) by giving all members of the public who are interested in and eligible for the Programs a way to learn about available positions through a [single portal](#). The public notice requirement does not preclude agencies from engaging in targeted outreach activities to colleges, universities and other talent partners.

OPM is responsible for the outreach to and recruitment of PMF Program Finalists. It posts the application for the Program annually, typically in the early fall, on [USAJOBS](#).

SELECTION PROCESS

Assessments and Selection

Applicants are evaluated using qualification standards. The Human Resources (HR) Office, in consultation with hiring managers, documents and submits the method(s) by which they plan to accept, rate and arrange applications in accordance with [5 CFR 302, Subpart C](#) and agency policy. For each method used, the agency identifies the title, occupational series and grade for the position being filled. Veterans' preference is applicable and granted in accordance with the provisions of [5 CFR 302](#).

Qualifying Educational Institutions

Qualifying educational institutions must be recognized by the [Department of Education](#). They include:

- High schools;
- Technical, vocational and trade schools;
- Two- or four-year colleges or universities;
- Graduate or professional schools; and
- Other qualifying institutions (such as accredited state-certified homeschool curricula (high school or college) or awardees of the Harry S. Truman Foundation Scholarship Program).

Please [click here](#) for a list of qualifying educational institutions.

Please note that education completed in foreign colleges or universities may be used to meet education requirements if it can be demonstrated that the foreign education is comparable to that received in an accredited educational institution in the United States.

Certificate Programs

A certificate program is post-secondary education, in a [qualifying educational institution](#), *equivalent to at least one academic year of full-time study* that is part of an accredited college-level, technical, trade, vocational or business school curriculum.

ONBOARDING

Onboarding is the process of welcoming and acclimating new employees into an organization, and providing them with the knowledge, tools and resources that they need to be successful and productive.

Although the terms onboarding and orientation are often used interchangeably, they have different goals and outcomes. Onboarding is a broader, longer-term process that helps new employees to transition smoothly and become engaged members of an agency, while orientation prepares them for their first day of work. Onboarding starts before the employee begins and often lasts through the first year of employment. The effectiveness of an onboarding program may not only impact employees' ability to successfully transition into an agency, but may also impact the agency's ability to retain talent.

Orientation

Orientation is an important part of a Pathways participant's experience. In addition to helping the participant learn about the benefits associated with her or his appointment and ensuring that she or he completes various forms, orientation is an opportunity for the participant to become familiar with key agency points of contact for questions that will inevitably arise during her or his tenure, as well as information about specific Programs, including roles and responsibilities. While orientation is not a requirement for the Internship Program or the Recent Graduates Program, agencies are strongly

encouraged to hold orientation sessions for participants in all of the Programs within 30 days of their appointments. OPM provides an orientation program for each class or cohort of PMF's. AS a part of developing employee engagement and to help with retention agencies should also have agency orientation session in addition to the OPM PMF orientation

Participant Agreements

Every agency must enter into a written agreement with *each* Pathways participant that it employs. These agreements are typically signed by an HR official, hiring manager or supervisor, and participant. Agreements must include expectations and define the following:

- A general description of the duties to be performed;
- Work schedules;
- Length of the appointment and termination date;
- Mentorship opportunities;
- Training requirements;
- Evaluation procedures that will be used for the participant;
- Requirements for continuation and successful completion of the Program;
- Minimum eligibility requirements for non-competitive conversion to a term or permanent appointment in the competitive service under the specific Program in which the participant is employed; and
- Any other requirements or expectations established by the agency.

Individual Development Plans

All Recent Graduates and Fellows³ will be involved in the planning of their developmental activities through an Individual Development Plan (IDP). While Interns are not required to complete IDPs, OPM recommends that any Interns appointed for longer than 90 days be placed on one.

IDPs provide you with an opportunity to ensure that the participant that you are supervising develops the requisite knowledge, skills and abilities to perform effectively for the duration of the Program, as well as becomes eligible for non-competitive conversion to a permanent position.

IDPs should be tailored around the following elements:

- *Target Position or Portfolio:* A brief description of the target position or portfolio, and the specific knowledge, skills and abilities that will be needed to qualify for it upon successful completion of the Program.
- *Learning Objectives:* A description of general management areas, as well as specific technical skills and experiences.
- *Details and Timelines:* An overview of when and how the learning objectives will be met through participation in required trainings and other developmental activities.
- *Demonstrated Success:* A means for tracking the completion of all IDP objectives. The supervisor and participant are partners in determining whether the objectives set forth in the IDP have been met at the end of the Program.

³ "Fellows," as used in this Toolkit, refers to individuals who have been appointed to the PMF Program. "Finalists," as used in this Toolkit, refers to individuals who applied to the PMF Program and were selected by OPM to become eligible for appointments as Fellows. All mentions of participants in the PMF Program will make reference to either Fellows and/or Finalists.

PROGRAM EXPERIENCE

Performance Management and Evaluation

Each Pathways participant, regardless of appointment duration, must be placed on a formal performance management plan. This plan will help the participant understand what is expected of her or him during the Program, and will allow you and other officials to provide objective feedback regarding her or his performance. It will also outline the level of job performance required for the participant to be eligible for conversion to the competitive service, and will help you to make a recommendation for conversion, as appropriate, at the end of the Program.

Mentors

Agencies must assign mentors to participants in the Recent Graduates and PMF Programs within 90 days of their appointments. While not required, OPM recommends that any Interns appointed for longer than 120 days to be assigned a mentor.

Mentors for Recent Graduates should be current agency employees, at the journeyman level or above, and should be outside of the Recent Graduates' chain of command. Mentors for Fellows must be current managerial employees inside of the Fellows' agencies, but outside of their chain of command.

Mentors should serve as coaches and trusted colleagues, not as supervisors. A formal mentoring process affords Recent Graduates and Fellows with professional development and guidance, and capitalizes on the experiences of seasoned employees who are committed to developing a highly skilled and high-performing workforce.

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The Internship Program provides students enrolled in a wide variety of [qualifying educational institutions](#) with paid opportunities to work in federal agencies and explore career paths related to their academic field of study or career interests. Students who successfully complete academic and Program requirements may be eligible for non-competitive conversion to a term or permanent position in the civil service.

This section is designed to cover requirements and guidance specific to the Internship Program. To learn about cross-cutting Program requirements (e.g., recruitment and outreach or onboarding) and general policies related to the Pathways Programs, please see the General Information section of this Toolkit.

There are two types of Interns that can be hired under the Internship Program—Interns and Interns Not-to-Exceed (NTE).⁴ Please see below for a high-level summary of how these position types vary by key Program element. More information about each of these features can be found later in this section.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS	INTERNS	INTERNS NTE
Public Notification	A USAJOBS announcement or advertisement is required.	A USAJOBS announcement or advertisement is required.
Veterans' Preference	Veterans' preference applies.	Veterans' preference applies.
Appointment Length	Initial period expected to last more than one year. Program end is generally the Intern's projected graduation date, plus 120 days of conversion eligibility.	Initial period expected to last less than one year. Program may be extended for various reasons, as long as the Intern NTE continues to meet eligibility requirements.
Schedule	Interns may work full- or part-time schedules, but not intermittent schedules.	Interns NTE may work full- or part-time schedules, but not intermittent schedules.
Type of Work	Agencies should assign meaningful work that supports your needs and the Intern's academic field of study or career interests. Agencies should not assign, as an Intern's primary duties, simple administrative or clerical tasks, such as scanning documents or filing.	Intern NTE appointments should be used for work that is short-term, of a project-oriented nature or of similarly limited duration. They should primarily be used to help complete temporary projects, perform labor-intensive tasks not requiring subject-matter expertise or fill summer jobs.
Conversion Eligibility	Yes. Upon completion of academic and Program requirements and that the Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA) used to fill her or his position	While intent to convert Interns NTE should be rare, it is possible. An Intern NTE may be non-competitively converted to the competitive service

⁴ "Interns," as used in this Toolkit, refers to longer term, indefinite Interns. "Interns NTE," as used in this Toolkit, refers to temporary Interns. All mentions of participants in the Internship Program will make reference to either Interns and/or Interns NTE.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS	INTERNS	INTERNS NTE
	stated the possibility of conversion, Interns may be non-competitively converted to the competitive service.	provided that she or he has met all academic and Program requirements, and that the Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA) used to fill her or his position stated the possibility of conversion. In order for Interns NTE who were hired without the possibility of non-competitive conversion to be converted to longer term, indefinite Interns, they must compete for these opportunities.

Appointments

Interns may be appointed to any grade level for which they qualify. The duties of the position to which an Intern is appointed must be related to her or his academic field of study or career interests.

Eligibility

Interns and Interns NTE must:

- Be accepted for enrollment or enrolled and seeking a degree or certificate in a [qualifying educational institution](#) on a full- or half-time basis (as determined by the educational institution);
- Meet the definition of a student throughout the duration of their appointments;
- Meet the academic standards set forth by their agencies; and
- Meet the qualification standards (e.g., series and grade) for their Internship positions.

In addition to the government-wide eligibility requirements noted above, agencies may use requirements such as the ability to work a specified number of hours per week, be in good academic standing or be able to work in the specific location(s) listed in the JOA as eligibility criteria. These criteria may be referenced in the agency’s Pathways Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the JOA and/or the Participant Agreement.

Program Requirements

Interns are required to:

- Provide proof of their academic status;
- Maintain good academic standing, as defined by the educational institutions that they are attending;
- Complete their Participant Agreement and obtain signatures from her or his supervisor and the HR official;
- Remain students as long as they are employed under the Internship Program by their agencies;
- Perform their jobs successfully; and
- Meet any other agency-specific requirements outlined in their Participant Agreements.

In addition to these requirements, OPM recommends that any Intern appointed for longer than 90 days be placed on an Individual Development Plan (IDP) to create and track her or his career planning, professional development, and training activities.

Breaks in Program

A break in program is defined as a period of time in which an Intern is working, but unable to attend classes, or is neither attending classes nor working. While breaks in program are not common, they are permissible in certain circumstances (e.g., medical leave, financial hardship or military service). An agency may use its discretion to either approve or deny a request for a break in program, as well as determine the length of the break.

Agencies should establish a policy that defines breaks in program, as well as limits the allowable number of breaks in program to ensure that Interns make progress toward completing their academic and Program requirements in a reasonable timeframe.

Conversion

Interns are eligible for conversion to a term or permanent position the competitive service once all academic and Program requirements have been met. Interns must:

- Be a United States citizen;
- Complete at least 640 hours of work experience acquired through the Program while enrolled as a full- or half-time degree- or certificate-seeking student;
- Complete a course of academic study, within the preceding 120-day period, at a [qualifying educational institution](#) conferring a diploma, certificate or degree;
- Meet the qualification standards for the position to which they will be converted;
- Receive a favorable recommendation by an official of the agency or agencies in which she or he served; and
- Meet any other agency-specific requirements outlined in their Participant Agreements.

An agency may grant credit for up to one half (320 hours) of the 640-hour service requirement for:

- Outstanding academic achievement and exceptional job performance;
- Other comparable federal or non-federal (e.g., third-party) internship experience; or
- Certain active duty military or volunteer service.

Please [click here](#) to learn more about waiving hours.

Conversion to the competitive service must take place within 120 days of successful degree completion for both Interns and Interns NTE. If eligible Interns are not converted within this window of time, then they must be terminated. The 120-day period cannot be used for the Intern to finish any remaining Program requirements—it should be used solely for administrative purposes. An Intern may be converted to a position within the employing agency or any other agency across government.

While intent to convert Interns NTE should be rare, it is possible. An Intern NTE may be non-competitively converted to the competitive service provided that she or he has met all academic and Program requirements, and that the JOA used to fill her or his position stated the possibility of conversion. In order for Interns NTE who were hired without the possibility of non-competitive conversion to be converted to longer term, indefinite Interns, they must compete for these opportunities.

Separations and Terminations

An Intern may be separated for any reason to include misconduct, poor performance or suitability; upon expiration of her or his temporary appointment; or 120 days after completion of her or his academic program, unless she or he is selected for non-competitive conversion to the competitive service.

Please contact your Employee Relations (ER) Specialist or Human Resources (HR) Specialist to learn more about separating Interns.

RECENT GRADUATES PROGRAM

The Recent Graduates Program is a dynamic, one-year developmental program that promotes careers in the civil service to recent graduates. Students who successfully complete Program requirements may be eligible for non-competitive conversion to a term or permanent position in the civil service.

This section is designed to cover requirements and guidance specific to the Recent Graduates Program. To learn about cross-cutting Program requirements (e.g., recruitment and outreach or onboarding) and general policies related to the Pathways Programs, please see the General Information section of this Toolkit.

Please see below for a high-level summary of key Program elements. More information about each of these features can be found later in this section.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS	RECENT GRADUATES
Public Notification	A USAJOBS announcement or advertisement is required.
Veterans' Preference	Veterans' preference applies.
Appointment Length	One year. Program may be extended if the position warrants a longer and more structured training schedule. An agency must identify in its Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) the duration of its Recent Graduates Program, including the criteria used to determine the need for a Program that lasts longer than one year.
Conversion Eligibility	Yes. Once all Program requirements have been completed, Recent Graduates may be non-competitively converted to the competitive service.

Appointments

The following chart notes the initial appointment requirements for Recent Graduates.

GRADE LEVEL	QUALIFICATION
Up to the GS-9 or equivalent	Any position for which the Recent Graduate qualifies.
GS-11 or equivalent	Science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) occupations, if the Recent Graduate possesses a Ph.D. or equivalent degree directly related to the STEM position to which she or he is being appointed. Scientific and professional occupations that are research-related, if the Recent Graduate possesses a master's degree or equivalent graduate degree directly related to the position to which she or he is being appointed.
GS-12	Scientific and professional occupations that are research-related, if the Recent Graduate possesses a Ph.D. or equivalent degree directly related to the STEM position to which she or he is being appointed.

Eligibility

Applicants to the Recent Graduates Program must apply within two years of degree or certificate completion. Veterans who were unable to apply to the Program within two years of receiving their

degree due to military service obligations have up to six years to apply to the Program after degree or certificate completion.

Program Requirements

Recent Graduates are required to:

- Complete Individual Development Plans (IDP) to create and track their career planning, professional development, and training activities within 45 days of their appointments;
- Complete their Participant Agreement and obtain signatures from her or his supervisor and the HR official;
- Be assigned a mentor outside of their chain-of-command within 90 days of their appointments; and
- Participate in a minimum of 40 hours of formal interactive training per year. The training must be consistent with their IDPs and target positions, and should not include mandatory annual training (e.g., ethics and security awareness).

In addition to these requirements, it is also recommended that Recent Graduates take part in an orientation session at their agencies as a part of their onboarding.

Extensions

Recent Graduates appointments may be extended for a period of up to 120 days under the employing agencies' procedures.

Appointment extensions should be used to cover rare or unusual circumstances or situations. The criteria for approving appointment extensions will be identified in each agency's Pathways MOU.

Conversion

Recent Graduates are eligible for conversion to a term or permanent position in the competitive service once all Program requirements have been met. Recent Graduates must:

- Be a United States citizen;
- Successfully complete at least one year of continuous service;
- Perform their jobs successfully;
- Meet the qualifications for the position to which they will be converted; and
- Meet any other agency-specific requirements outlined in their Participant Agreements.

If it appears that a Recent Graduate will not complete her or his program requirements on time, you should consult your agency's Human Resources (HR) Office as soon as possible to see if the Recent Graduate is eligible for a program extension.

Separations

A Recent Graduate may be separated for any reason to include misconduct, poor performance or suitability; or upon expiration of the Recent Graduates appointment, unless she or he is selected for non-competitive conversion to the competitive service.

Please contact your Employee Relations (ER) Specialist or HR Specialist to learn more about separating Recent Graduates.

PRESIDENTIAL MANAGEMENT FELLOWS PROGRAM

The Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program is the Federal Government’s premier, two-year leadership development program for advanced degree candidates who demonstrate, possess management and leadership potential, and have a clear interest in and commitment to public service. Individuals must apply within two years of receiving a qualifying advanced degree. Students may also apply in the fall of their final year of graduate school. Participants who successfully complete academic and Program requirements may be eligible for non-competitive conversion to a term or permanent position in the civil service.

This section is designed to cover requirements and guidance specific to the PMF Program. To learn about cross-cutting Program requirements (e.g., recruitment and outreach or onboarding) and general policies related to the Pathways Programs, please see the General Information section of this Toolkit.

Please see below for a high-level summary of key Program elements. More information about each of these features can be found later in this section.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS	FELLOWS ⁵
Public Notification	The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is required to post the initial announcement for the PMF Program on the PMF website . Once Finalists have been selected, agencies <i>must</i> post available positions on the PMF Talent Acquisition System (TAS).
Veterans’ Preference	Veterans’ preference applies. Click here for additional information.
Appointment Length	Two years.
Conversion Eligibility	Yes. Once all Program requirements have been completed and certified by an agency’s Executive Resources Board (ERB) or equivalent, a Fellow may be non-competitively converted to the competitive service.

Finalists

The recruitment, assessment and selection of Finalists is administered by OPM. Upon official selection, OPM announces the list of Finalists on the [PMF website](#) for agencies to consider for appointments as Fellows. Finalists have 12 months to obtain a PMF appointment upon their selection.

Appointments

Finalists are pre-qualified at the GS-9 level, but may be initially appointed at the GS-9 to GS-12 levels or equivalent.

Eligibility

Applicants to the Program must apply during the fall of their final year of graduate school or within two years of graduate degree completion. Students who apply during the fall of their final year of graduate school must complete their qualifying advanced degree by August 31 of the academic year in which the

⁵ “Fellows,” as used in this Toolkit, refers to individuals who have been appointed to the PMF Program. “Finalists,” as used in this Toolkit, refers to individuals who applied to the PMF Program and were selected by OPM to become eligible for appointments as Fellows. All mentions of participants in the PMF Program will make reference to either Fellows and/or Finalists.

competition is held. The application period for the Program is announced annually, typically in early fall, on the [PMF website](#).

OPM Reimbursement Fee

Agencies are required to pay OPM a fee of \$7,000 per Fellow to cover the recruitment, assessment, selection and placement of Fellows; Program-sponsored events (e.g., job fair, orientation, forums and graduation); and training and support for agencies and Fellows. Agencies must ensure that the appointment reimbursement fee is submitted to OPM no later than 30 days from entrance on duty (EOD).

Recruitment

To recruit a Finalist, you should:

- **Talk to your PMF Coordinator** to find out how to get started. Your [PMF Coordinator](#) can grant you access to the PMF TAS to search and view Finalists' online resumes.
- **Attend the PMF Job Fair** where you can meet and interview hundreds of Finalists. Come prepared with position descriptions, interview questions and information about your agency. Additional details about the PMF Job Fair and how to best prepare for it can be found [here](#).
- **Review your agency's policies and procedures** on starting grades, promotions, rotations, training, tuition reimbursement, relocation assistance and other PMF-related topics.
- **Review the "[Application of Hiring Preferences](#)" guidance** and learn how it applies to your candidate pool in the [PMF Guide for Agencies](#).
- **Determine who has the authority to make an offer of employment** and what steps that you need to take within your agency once you are ready to hire.

Program Requirements

Fellows are required to:

- Complete Individual Development Plans (IDP) to create and track their career planning, professional development, and training activities within 45 days of their appointments;
- Take part in an orientation session;
- Complete their Participant Agreement and obtain signatures from her or his supervisor and the HR official;
- Be assigned a mentor who is a managerial employee outside of their chain-of-command within 90 days of their appointments;
- Participate in a minimum of 80 hours of formal interactive training per year that address the competencies outlined in their IDPs. The training must be consistent with their IDPs and target positions, and should not include mandatory annual training (e.g., ethics and security awareness); and
- Take part in at least one developmental assignment, lasting four to six months, that is full-time, outside of their normal duties and immediate offices, and which provides managerial or technical responsibilities consistent with their IDPs and that will help to prepare them for conversion.

Extensions

Fellows' appointments may be extended for a period of up to 120 days under the employing agencies' procedures.

Appointment extensions should be used to cover rare or unusual circumstances or situations. The criteria for approving appointment extensions will be identified in each agency's Pathways Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Conversion

Fellows are eligible for conversion to a term or permanent position in the competitive service once all Program requirements have been met. Fellows must:

- Be a United States citizen;
- Successfully complete the Program in two years;
- Perform their jobs successfully;
- Meet the qualifications for the position to which they will be converted;
- Meet any other agency-specific requirements outlined in their Participant Agreements; and
- Receive a receipt of certification of Program completion from an ERB or equivalent.

At the beginning of a Fellow's second year in the Program, you should begin to plan for her or his conversion to a term or permanent position within your agency, as appropriate. If it appears that the Fellow will not complete her or his Program requirements in time to be converted into this job, but you are otherwise interested in ultimately converting the Fellow, you should consult your agency's Human Resources (HR) Office as soon as possible to see if the Fellow is eligible for a program extension.

Separations

A Fellow may be separated for any reason to include misconduct, poor performance or suitability; or upon expiration of her or his appointment, unless she or he is selected for non-competitive conversion to the competitive service.

Please contact your Employee Relations (ER) Specialist or HR Specialist to learn more about separating Fellows.

Your Role as a Hiring Manager or Supervisor

As a hiring manager or supervisor of a Fellow, you play a key role in her or his success. Your responsibilities include the following:

- Working with your PMF Coordinator to post available positions on the PMF TAS.
- Determining the selection process.
- Helping to recruit Finalists for your available positions by participating in the [PMF Job Fair](#).
- Once hired, establishing an EOD date for each Fellow, determining and sharing her or his security requirements, and assigning her or him to a specific position with defined duties and career ladders.
- Preparing and executing an onboarding strategy for the Fellow.
- Signing off on the Fellow's Participant Agreement.
- Assisting with the assignment of a mentor within 90 days of appointment.
- Developing an IDP with the Fellow that addresses her or his target position, learning objectives, developmental requirements and more within 45 days of appointment.
- Providing at least 80 hours of formal interactive training to the Fellow during each year of the Program.
- Helping the Fellow to arrange at least one four- to six-month [developmental assignment](#).

- Providing a reasonable amount of time during work hours for the Fellow to participate in other Program activities, such as PMF Forums or optional rotational assignments ranging from one to six months in duration.
- Establishing and implementing a performance plan and evaluation criteria for the Fellow, and providing feedback on her or his performance.
- Working with the Fellow to ensure that she or he is minimally performing at the satisfactory level during both years of the Program.
- Providing input to your ERB or equivalent, as needed, on the Fellow's progress and whether she or he has successfully completed the Program requirements.
- Working with HR to convert the Fellow to a term or permanent position after certification from your ERB.

Hiring Manager or Supervisor Orientation

The PMF Program Office regularly offers a virtual orientation for the hiring managers and supervisors of Fellows. This two-hour webinar addresses Program requirements, roles and responsibilities, and more. The schedule for upcoming sessions and instructions on how to register for them is available [here](#).

RESOURCES

DEFINITIONS

Advanced Degree: A professional or graduate degree (e.g., Master's, Ph.D. or Juris Doctorate (J.D.)) from an accredited academic institution.

Advertisement: A notice to the public on [USAJOBS](#), which provides information on a Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA), as well as instructions on how to apply for the JOA through [USAJOBS](#) or the agency's website.

Appointment: Any personnel action that brings an individual onto the rolls (staff) of an agency.

Appointment Extension: An agency may extend the appointment of an Intern Not-to-Exceed (NTE) (temporary Intern) who meets eligibility criteria for one additional year up to the maximum allowable time in the Program. An agency may extend the appointment for a Recent Graduate or Fellow for up to 120 days to cover rare or unusual circumstances or situations. The agency's Pathways MOU must identify the criteria for approving extensions.

Break in Program (applies to Interns and Interns NTE): A period of time in which an Intern is working, but unable to attend classes, or is neither attending classes nor working. While breaks in program are not common, they are permissible in certain circumstances.

Break in Service: The time when an employee is no longer on the payroll of an agency. A separation of less than three calendar days is not considered a break in service. (In computing creditable service for benefits (e.g., leave accrual and reduction in force retention), a separation of one, two or three calendar days is not considered to be a break in service; a separation of four or more calendar days is considered to be a break in service and the days of separation are subtracted from the employee's total creditable service.)

Certificate Program: Post-secondary education, in a qualifying educational institution, *equivalent to at least one academic year of full-time study* that is part of an accredited college-level, technical, trade, vocational or business school curriculum.

Competitive Service: All civilian positions in the federal government that are not specifically excepted from the civil service laws by or pursuant to statute, by the President or by OPM under Rule VI, and that are not in the Senior Executive Service (SES).

Developmental Assignment (applies to Fellows): An assignment lasting four to six months that is full-time, outside of the Fellow's normal duties and immediate office, and which provides managerial or technical responsibilities that will help to prepare the Fellow for conversion.

Entrance on Duty (EOD) Date: The date on which a person completes the necessary paperwork and is sworn in as an employee.

Excepted Service: Unclassified service, unclassified civil service or positions outside of the competitive service and the SES. Although excepted service positions have been excepted from some of the

requirements of the competitive service by law, executive order or OPM regulation, agencies must make selections using the provisions of part 302, which, among other things, provides for the application of veterans' preference.

Executive Resources Board (ERB) (applies to PMFs): Senior official(s) who have been given responsibility for executive resources management and oversight by the agency head. The individual(s) review Fellows' conversion packages and certify whether Fellows have successfully completed Program requirements.

Individual Development Plan (IDP): A strategic roadmap that employees can use to create and track their career planning, professional development, and training activities. It should make note of an individual's target position, learning objectives and developmental requirements.

Intermittent Schedule: A schedule in which an employee's work recurs at sporadic or irregular intervals so that her or his tour of duty cannot be scheduled in advance of the administrative work week.

Intern: A current student who has been appointed to the Internship Program for an initial period that is expected to last more than one year.

Intern Not-to-Exceed (NTE): A current student who has been appointed to the Internship Program for an initial period that is not expected to last more than one year.

Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA): A federal job announcement for hiring opportunities that is required to be posted on [USAJOBS](#).

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): A required written agreement that every agency must sign prior to utilizing the Programs. This document, which is renewed every two years, outlines how an agency will administer the Programs (e.g., accepting applications and assessing candidates).

Merit Systems Principles: The nine statutory principles governing the management of the federal executive branch workforce.

Non-Competitive Conversion: The changing of an employee from one appointment to another appointment without competition under the same or a different authority in the same agency.

Notice of a Recruitment Event: An advertisement on [USAJOBS](#) publicizing the event and providing information on how to apply to the JOA in-person, as well as instructions on an alternative method of applying to the JOA if candidates are unable to participate in the event.

Participant Agreement: A required written agreement between every agency and Pathways participant that clearly identifies expectations, including a general description of duties, evaluation procedures, work schedules, and minimum eligibility requirements for conversion to term or permanent positions in the competitive service.

Pathways Programs Officer (PPO): The individual responsible for Program administration plans, including coordinating recruitment and onboarding processes, and ensuring that mentors are assigned, as appropriate, and IDPs are put in place. The PPO also serves as a liaison to OPM by providing OPM

with implementation updates, clarifying technical and programmatic issues, sharing best practices and lessons learned, and submitting applicable reports.

Pathways Programs Participant: Any individual appointed to one of the Programs.

Preference Eligible: Veterans who have been separated from the armed forces under honorable conditions, or who expect to be discharged or released under honorable conditions within 120 days, and who served on active duty during a war or in a campaign or expedition, for which a campaign badge has been authorized, or during particular defined periods. It also includes disabled veterans and, under certain circumstances, the mothers, spouses or unmarried widows or widowers of certain veterans. (Applicants who expect to be discharged or released within 120 days must provide a DD Form 214, or other documentation that provides equivalent information on the length and type of service and the character of release or discharge to the hiring agency at the time of appointment to confirm discharge or release and entitlement to veterans' preference.)

Presidential Management Fellow (Fellow): An individual who has been appointed to the PMF Program.

PMF Coordinator: The individual responsible for administering an agency's PMF Program, including coordinating recruitment and onboarding, and ensuring that mentors are assigned and IDPs are put in place. The PMF Coordinator serves as a liaison to OPM by providing OPM with implementation updates, clarifying technical and programmatic issues, sharing best practices and lessons learned, and submitting applicable reports.

PMF Finalists: Individuals who applied to the PMF Program and whose applications were rated and ranked and then placed in the candidate inventory.

PMF Talent Acquisition System (applies to Finalists and Fellows): The OPM database used to create accounts, search for and appoint PMF Finalists, and post JOAs and developmental and rotational assignments.

Qualifying Educational Institution: A public high school whose curriculum has been approved by a state or local governing body, a private school that provides secondary education as determined under state law, or a homeschool that is allowed to operate in a state; and any of the following educational institutions or curricula that have been accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the Secretary of the Department of Education: a technical or vocational school, a two-year or four-year college or university, a graduate or professional school (e.g., law school, medical school), or a post-secondary homeschool curriculum.

Recent Graduate: An individual who has been appointed to the Recent Graduates Program.

Rotational Assignment: An assignment that is one to six months in duration, and that can be offered at the agency's discretion.

Schedule D: The appointing authority established by [Executive Order 13562](#) that is designed to appoint individuals to the Programs.

Term Appointment: An appointment made to a position in the competitive service for a period that is expected to last longer than one year, but no more than four years, when the need for an employee's services is not permanent.

USAJOBS: The federal government's official one-stop source for federal jobs and employment information.

HELPFUL LINKS

- [Executive Order 13562](#)
- [Final Rule](#)
- [Regulations](#)
- [OPM Pathways Fact Sheets](#)
- [OPM Pathways FAQs](#)
- [OPM Pathways Transition and Implementation Guidance](#)
- [OPM Pathways Webpage](#)
- [Sample PMF IDP \(OPM Form 1302\)](#)
- [PMF TAS](#)
- [PMF Website](#)
- [Assessments & Selective Factors](#)
- [Classification & Job Design](#)
- [Classification & Qualifications](#)

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

- **WHO:** Students who are currently enrolled in or accepted for enrollment in a [qualifying educational institution](#) are eligible for the Program.
 - There are two types of Interns that can be hired under the Program—Interns and Interns Not-to-Exceed (NTE). Please refer to the Internship section of the Pathways Toolkit for Hiring Managers and Supervisors (Toolkit) to find out more about these appointments.
- **WHAT:** Paid opportunities for students to work in federal agencies and explore career paths related to their academic field of study or career interests, as well as become eligible for non-competitive conversion to a permanent position in the civil service.
- **WHY:** This Program provides a great opportunity for you to learn about students' competencies, skills and fit before hiring them into permanent positions, and meet both your temporary and long-term hiring needs.

Role of the Hiring Manager and/or Supervisor

As a hiring manager and/or supervisor of an Intern, you will be accountable for supporting the workforce planning for and recruitment, selection, onboarding, management and conversion of this individual. Please find a checklist of your key responsibilities below.

Workforce Planning

- Engage in workforce planning by considering your agency and whether there is a need to utilize this Program to reach new talent.
- Reach out to the budget and/or administrative staff within your agency to fund the position.
- Identify an available position within your agency and obtain the necessary approvals to hire.
- Determine the security requirements with HR.
- Meet with Human Resources (HR) to review agency-specific Pathways policies and procedures, and determine your specific role and responsibilities throughout the recruitment, selection, onboarding, management and conversion processes.

Recruitment

- Determine the skills necessary for the position and draft a job opportunity announcement (JOA).
- Determine the basic qualifications (e.g., grade, location and GPA) and assessment strategy (e.g., questionnaires and type of interview) for the position.
- Help to develop and implement a recruitment strategy, including identifying and connecting with key academic institutions and networks, as well as working with HR to post the opportunity on [USAJOBS](#) or the agency website.

Selection

- Review resumes, prepare for and hold interviews, conduct reference checks and make an offer.
- Establish an entrance on duty (EOD) date.
- Initiate a background investigation at the appropriate level in order to facilitate determinations concerning eligibility for logical and physical access to agency systems and facilities and, for positions that can lead to a permanent appointment in the competitive service, for suitability.

Onboarding and Management

- Develop and implement a meaningful onboarding plan that ensures the participant:

- Completes a Participant Agreement and obtains the necessary signatures, including yours;
- Understands her or his Program requirements (e.g., Program length and training requirements);
- Understands what type of Intern she or he is – Intern or Intern NTE – and how this may impact their program requirements;
- Understands her or his work portfolio and how it supports the mission of the agency;
- Understands what it will take to become eligible for conversion to a permanent employee.
- Assign meaningful work that supports your needs and the participant’s academic field of study or career interests.
- Work with HR to develop and implement appropriate performance standards and evaluation criteria.
- Monitor the participant’s performance and provide holistic feedback according to your agency’s performance management system.
- Track the participant’s progress towards meeting academic and Program requirements and ensuring that she or he remains on track for Program completion and/or conversion.

Conversion

- Towards the ends of the Program, determine whether the participant is conversion-eligible (if applicable).
- Inform HR of your decision whether to convert the participant to a permanent position (if applicable).
- Notify the participant of your decision (if applicable).

RECENT GRADUATES PROGRAM

- **WHO:** Individuals who have received a degree or certificate from a [qualifying educational institution](#) within the previous two years, with the exception of veterans who have up to six years to apply to the Program due to military service obligations.
- **WHAT:** A dynamic, one-year developmental program designed to promote careers in the civil service to recent graduates, in part, by providing participants with the opportunity to become eligible for non-competitive conversion to a permanent position in the civil service.
- **WHY:** During their participation in this structured developmental program, learn about Recent Graduates' competencies, skills and fit before hiring them into permanent positions.

Role of the Hiring Manager and/or Supervisor

As a hiring manager and/or supervisor of a Recent Graduate, you will be accountable for supporting the workforce planning for and recruitment, selection, onboarding, management and conversion of this individual. Please find a checklist of your key responsibilities below.

Workforce Planning

- Engage in workforce planning by considering your agency and whether there is a need to utilize this Program to reach new talent.
- Reach out to the budget and/or administrative staff within your agency to fund the position.
- Identify an available position within your agency and obtain the necessary approvals to hire.
- Determine the security requirements with HR.
- Meet with Human Resources (HR) to review agency-specific Pathways policies and procedures, and determine your specific role and responsibilities throughout the recruitment, selection, onboarding, management and conversion processes.

Recruitment

- Determine the skills necessary for the position and draft a job opportunity announcement (JOA).
- Determine the basic qualifications (e.g., grade, location and GPA) and assessment strategy (e.g., questionnaires and type of interview) for the position.
- Help to develop and implement a recruitment strategy, including identifying and connecting with key academic institutions and networks, as well as working with HR to post the opportunity on [USAJOBS](#) or agency website.

Selection

- Review resumes, prepare for and hold interviews, conduct reference checks and make an offer.
- Establish an entrance on duty (EOD) date.
- Initiate a background investigation at the appropriate level in order to facilitate determinations concerning eligibility for logical and physical access to agency systems and facilities; suitability; and, if applicable, eligibility for access to classified information.

Onboarding and Management

- Develop and implement a meaningful onboarding plan that ensures the participant:
 - Takes part in an orientation session;
 - Completes a Participant Agreement and obtains the necessary signatures, including yours;

- Understands her or his Program requirements (e.g., Program length and training requirements);
 - Understands her or his work portfolio and how it supports the mission of the agency;
 - Completes an Individual Development Plan (IDP) to create and track her or his career planning, professional development and training activities within 45 days of appointment;
 - Is paired with a mentor outside of her or his chain-of-command within 90 days of appointment;
 - Participates in a minimum of 40 hours of formal interactive training per year;
 - Understands what it will take to become eligible for conversion to a permanent employee.
- Assign meaningful work that supports your needs and the participant's career interests, while providing progressively more responsible duties that allow for career advancement.
 - Work with HR to develop and implement appropriate performance standards and evaluation criteria.
 - Monitor the participant's performance and provide holistic feedback according to your agency's performance management system.
 - Track the participant's progress towards meeting Program requirements and ensuring that she or he remains on track for Program completion and conversion.

Conversion

- Towards the ends of the Program, determine whether the participant is conversion-eligible.
- Inform HR of your decision whether to convert the participant to a permanent position.
- Notify the participant of your decision.

PRESIDENTIAL MANAGEMENT FELLOWS (PMF) PROGRAM

- **WHO:** Individuals who are in their final year of graduate school and who are scheduled to complete their academic requirements by August 31 of the academic year in which the competition is held, as well as individuals who have received an advanced degree from a [qualifying educational institution](#) within the previous two years.
- **WHAT:** The federal government's premier, two-year leadership development program for advanced degree recipients who demonstrate leadership potential, and have a clear interest in and commitment to public service. It provides participants with the opportunity to become eligible for non-competitive conversion to a permanent position in the civil service.
- **WHY:** Participants in this flagship leadership development program for advanced degree recipients have already gone through a rigorous assessment process sponsored by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and can typically be placed in higher entry-level positions after you have had the opportunity to learn about their competencies, skills and fit.

Role of the Hiring Manager and/or Supervisor

As a hiring manager and/or supervisor for a participant in the PMF Program, you will be accountable for supporting the workforce planning for this individual. Please find a checklist of your key responsibilities below.

Workforce Planning

- Engage in workforce planning by considering your agency and whether there is a need to utilize this Program to reach new talent.
- Reach out to the budget and/or administrative staff within your agency to fund the position, including the OPM Reimbursement Fee.
- Identify an available position within your agency and obtain the necessary approvals to hire.
- Determine the security requirements with HR.
- Meet with Human Resources (HR) to review agency-specific Pathways policies and procedures, and determine your specific role and responsibilities throughout the recruitment, selection, onboarding, management and conversion processes.

Unlike the Internship and Recent Graduates Programs, OPM administers the recruitment, assessment and selection of Finalists. After the Finalists are announced, you will be responsible for recruiting, selecting, onboarding, managing and converting a Fellow at your agency. Please find a checklist of your key responsibilities below.

Recruitment

- Determine the skills necessary for the position and draft a job opportunity announcement (JOA).
- Work with your PMF Coordinator to advertise opportunities on the PMF Talent Acquisition System (TAS).
- Attend the PMF Job Fair.

Selection

- Review resumes, prepare for and hold interviews, conduct reference checks and make an offer.
- Establish an entrance on duty (EOD) date.

- Initiate a background investigation at the appropriate level in order to facilitate determinations concerning eligibility for logical and physical access to agency systems and facilities; suitability; and, if applicable, eligibility for access to classified information.

Onboarding and Management

- Develop and implement a meaningful onboarding plan that ensures the participant:
 - Takes part in an orientation session;
 - Completes a Participant Agreement and obtains the necessary signatures, including yours;
 - Understands her or his Program requirements (e.g., Program length and training requirements);
 - Understands her or his work portfolio and how it supports the mission of the agency;
 - Completes an Individual Development Plan (IDP) to create and track her or his career planning, professional development and training activities within 45 days of appointment;
 - Is paired with a mentor outside of her or his chain-of-command within 90 days of appointment;
 - Participates in a minimum of 80 hours of formal interactive training per year;
 - Takes part in a four-to-six month developmental assignment; and
 - Understands what it will take to become eligible for conversion to a permanent employee.
- Assign meaningful work that supports your needs and the participant's career interests, while providing progressively more responsible duties that allow for career advancement.
- Provide a reasonable amount of time during work hours for the participant to engage in other Program activities, such as PMF Forums or optional rotational opportunities ranging from one to six months in duration.
- Work with HR to develop and implement appropriate performance standards and evaluation criteria.
- Monitor the participant's performance and provide holistic feedback according to your agency's performance management system.
- Track the participant's progress towards meeting Program requirements and determining whether she or he remains on track for Program completion and conversion.

Conversion

- Towards the ends of the Program, determine whether the participant is conversion-eligible.
- Provide input to your agency's Executive Resources Board (ERB) (or equivalent), as needed, to evaluate the participant's progress and to certify whether s/he has successfully completed Program requirements.
- Inform HR of your decision whether to convert the participant to a permanent position.
- Notify the participant of your decision.



U.S. Office of Personnel Management

Employee Services

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