



10 Keys to **CRACKING THE CODE** to Your Federal Job Search

Know which Federal jobs you are qualified for: Federal applications must convey that the applicant already has the skills required to do the job. Many people apply to jobs they could easily do, but for which they do not already possess the specific skills. The minimum requirement is you must have 12 months of experience doing the same or similar work.

Identify the best jobs for your background: Many people apply to jobs that are not a good fit for them. Use a technique we call the "80% Rule." Carefully review the vacancy announcement language, particularly under the "Duties" tab. Look for an 80% match between the duties listed and your skills. This is a great technique to use to determine if the job in the vacancy announcement is a good fit for you.

Create a Federal resume: Do not try to apply for a Federal government job with a private sector resume. It is too short and does not include the information required to score the most points during the rating and ranking process.

Make your Federal resume lengthy: The average Federal resume is 3 to 7 pages and extremely detailed. A Federal resume addresses your skills and competencies, whereas a private sector resume focuses on results and accomplishments – two very different objectives. Many Federal application packages focus on accomplishments and do not include the "nitty gritty" details, which result in the highest possible score. The more detailed the information you provide, the more points your application is likely to score during the rating and ranking process.

Ensure you have the right content in your Federal resume: Federal resumes need to be extremely detailed and written with descriptive adjectives. Words like "complex" and "routinely" are meaningful to the Federal HR Specialist.

Answer the self-assessment questions liberally: Most online applications ask applicants to rate their professional experience by using a series of questions. The applicant needs to receive the highest rating to move forward in the rating process. Review the answers to the question and select the one representing your the most senior experience level -that is the one that is worth the most points. Give yourself credit! Do not be dishonest - but boast, brag, market yourself, rationalize, justify - whatever you want to call it. Then make sure your resume supports your responses. Remember it is called a "self-assessment questionnaire" for a reason!

Include KSAs (Knowledge, Skill and Ability) in your Federal resume: Most Federal agencies no longer require you to write narrative essays when you initially apply to a job. However, it is totally your responsibility to make sure you possess the required KSAs and they are incorporated into your resume. Otherwise, you will be deemed not qualified for the position, not because you don't have the skills but because you didn't tell them you have the skills by incorporating the KSAs into your resume.

Be persistent: You must be persistent and consistent about applying for Federal jobs on a regular basis and following up on your applications. It can take dozens (or more) of applications and from three to 18 months to get a Federal interview with a hiring manager. (This is a bureaucracy, after all!). If you are getting results showing you are eligible - not referred, it is still good. It means you are applying to the right jobs for your background, but you might need to work more on your application package.

Work Your Network: One savvy method to get a chance to speak with a Federal government official is to request an informational interview with a Federal employee (preferably a hiring manager). An informational interview (not a job interview) will enable you to learn about the agency and its needs and give you a chance to convey your skills to a Federal hiring manager. How do you get an informational interview? Start by asking neighbors, friends and family members who work or are affiliated with the Federal government!

Use USAJOBS for your Federal job search: USAJOBS should be the hub of your Federal job search. It houses 99% of the Federal government's vacancies. It allows you to track all your applications, along with the disposition of each vacancy to which you applied.