Applying for Forest Service Positions

Tips for Applicants

This guide explains the steps on how to apply to Forest Service job announcements listed on USAJOBS.gov and gives tips to help you understand and complete the application process. The most important part of the application process is to thoroughly read the job announcement, which will list everything required to apply for the position. For your application to be considered complete, you must complete and send in all required information as listed in the USAJOBS announcement.

How to Apply

Step 1- Create a USAJOBS Account

Before you can apply for a job, you must first create an account at USAJOBS. Click "Create an Account" in the upper right hand corner of the Web Page to register.

Step 2 - Upload or Create a Resume

Your USAJOBS account allows you to create or upload a resume to use when applying for jobs. Up to five resumes can be saved to your account.

1. Log in to your USAJOBS account.
2. Click "Resumes" on the left side of your account page and follow the directions.

Step 3 – Upload Documents

Up to 10 documents can be saved into your account that you can include in your application such as SF-50s, performance appraisals, college transcripts, DD-214, and training certificates. Click "Saved Documents" on the left side of your account page and follow the directions for uploading. Each uploaded document must not exceed 3MB in size.

Step 4 – Search for Jobs on USAJOBS

1. To do a quick search, enter keywords such as job title, agency name, job announcement number, occupational series, and location.

2. For a more specific search, click "Advanced Search" and fill in the information.

3. Indicate if you are searching for vacancies open to all U.S. Citizens or Federal Employees. The system defaults to U.S. Citizens.

4. You can create and save job searches for the types of positions you frequently search and setup automatic email notifications when an announcement is posted for vacancies matching your search criteria. Click "Saved Searches" on the left side of your account page and follow the directions.

Step 5 – Apply

When you have located a job opening that you are interested in applying to:

1. Click "Apply Online" in the upper right corner of the vacancy announcement. You will be prompted to sign into your USAJOBS account if you have not already signed in.

2. You will have the choice to select the resume and documents saved in your account, create a new resume, upload a different resume, and/or upload other documents. Click "Save job and create, edit, or upload a resume" if you wish to create or edit your resume.

3. After previewing your attached resume, check the boxes for the required fields at the bottom of the page.

4. Click "Apply for this position now!" to be taken to the Forest Service online application system and the online questionnaire.

Helpful tip: Print the vacancy announcement and assessment questions and thoroughly review the job duties, qualifications, and required documents for the position.

Step 6 – Core Eligibility Questions

1. Read the instructions on this page.

2. Review prefilled information and provide additional information as needed or required.

3. Click on and open the documents that you attached in the previous step to ensure they have been uploaded to your application.

4. Click "Save and Continue".

Step 7 – Application Preferences

1. Select the series and grades (if more than one) that you wish to apply for.

2. Select your preferred location(s).

3. Click "Save and Continue".

Step 8 – Minimum Qualification Questions

Your responses to the minimum qualifications questions must be supported in your resume.

1. Select the answers that apply.

2. Click *"Save and Continue".*

Step 9 – Assessment Questions

These job specific questions measure your proficiency in various job related skills. Typically, the questions consist of multiple-choice or Yes/No responses. Narratives or essay type questions are sometimes included to demonstrate work experience.

1. Select the answers that apply.

2. Click *"Save and Continue".*

Note: If you are applying for a promotion, the Assessment Questions are extremely important in the application evaluation process. Inaccurate responses may result in your application not being referred to the hiring manager for consideration.

Step 10 – Application Summary

1. Review your application information including answers to the online questionnaire.

2. Make changes if necessary.

3. Ensure that documents to be included in your application are shown by clicking on the link for each to open and review.

4. When satisfied that your application package is complete, click *"Begin Application Submission"* and follow the directions for submitting your application.

Helpful Information

Resume Tips

- Customize your resume to ensure it documents duties and accomplishments you have gained that are directly related to this position in order to verify that qualifications are met.

- Your resume must support your responses to the online questionnaire (you may preview the online questionnaire by clicking on the link at the end of the "How You Will Be Evaluated" section of the job announcement).

- Required information for work history/experience:
    - Work history on your resume must include start [mm/yy] and stop [mm/yy] dates for each position you are listing, work schedule, hours worked per week, title, series and grade if applicable, supervisors name, phone number and email address and whether the Hiring Manager may contact for reference checks.
    - Ensure your resume includes all required information as stated in the vacancy announcement.

- Temporary seasonal work experience must be separated by month and year for each period of service.
    - Do not combine multiple periods of time into years such as "worked seasonal during the summers of 2010-2015."
    - Indicate whether the work was full-time (40 hrs/wk), part-time, or intermittent.

- Include key words from the job announcement and online questionnaire in your resume if you have that particular skill or knowledge

- Spell out acronyms

- Be honest

- Write clear and concise statements

- Use active verbs

- Proofread your resume for spelling, grammar, and content

How You Will Be Evaluated

Your application package includes your resume, responses to the online questionnaire, and supporting documents. *Your responses to the online questionnaire will determine whether you possess the qualifications needed to perform the job.* The online questionnaire includes core

eligibility, minimum qualifications, and job specific assessment questions. Your responses to the questions will be reviewed by human resources to verify you are eligible to be considered, meet the basic qualification requirements, and, if applying for a promotion, meet the criteria to be referred among the best qualified candidates.

Basis of rating: You will receive a numerical rating based on your online responses to the job specific Assessment Questions (see Step 9 above). These questions are designed to determine the degree to which you possess the knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies listed in the vacancy announcement for the job you are applying. Based on your answers, you will be rated on the extent and quality of your experience, education, and training relevant to the duties of the position.

When answering the questions, select the responses that accurately reflect your highest level of knowledge and experience.

- Do not overstate or understate your level of experience as this may result in your application not being referred for consideration.
- It is very important that your resume clearly support your responses to the questions addressing experience and education relevant to the position. This information is used by human resources to determine if you are qualified for the position and to verify your responses to the online questionnaire.

Guidance on Official Transcripts

College transcripts must be included if the vacancy announcement indicates education is required for meeting basic qualifications and/or if education is being used as a substitute for specialized experience. An unofficial copy is sufficient to apply; however, if selected, an official transcript will be required prior to receiving a final job offer.

Education must have been successfully completed and obtained from an accredited school, college, or university.

Most foreign education is not accredited by an accrediting body that is recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education. If not accredited, you must submit all necessary documents to a private U.S. organization that specializes in interpretation of foreign educational credentials, commonly called a credential evaluation service. To be acceptable, the foreign credential evaluation must include/describe:

- The type of education received;

- The level of education in relation to the U.S. education system and state that its comparability recommendations follow the general guidelines of the U.S. National Council for the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials;

- The content of the educational program earned abroad and the standard obtained;

- The status of the awarding foreign school's recognition and legitimacy in its home country's education system; and

- Any other information of interest such as what the evaluation service did to obtain this information, the qualifications of the evaluator, and any indications as to other problems such as forgery.

For a list of private organizations that evaluate foreign education, visit the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services website.

Current Forest Service employees:

Current employees can get a copy of previously submitted official college transcripts from their electronic Official Personnel File (eOPF) by following these steps:

1. Log in to Connect HR.
2. Under "My Links", select "eOPF".
3. Click "Accept".
4. You will receive a pop-up notification that reads, "The webpage you are viewing is trying to close the tab. Do you want to close this tab?" Click "Yes". (If it takes you back to the Connect HR page, minimize the page and eOPF will open behind it).
5. Click on "My eOPF" to access your personnel file.
6. If you had previously submitted your official college transcripts and they are not in your eOPF, contact your human resources service team.

Guidance on SF-50s

Current and former Federal employees must submit the most recent **non-award** SF-50 Notification of Personnel Action showing they are/were in the **competitive service** and the **highest grade held**.

- All of this information may not always be on the same most recent SF-50; therefore, additional SF-50s will need to be submitted to ensure your qualifications, including time-in-grade requirements, can be evaluated accurately. For example, you may have

previously held a position on a permanent basis at a higher grade than your current position. You will need to submit an SF-50 for this position showing your highest grade.

- If your application does not include an SF-50 with the required information, your application may be considered incomplete, resulting in non-referral.

Guidance on Performance Appraisals

Current and former Federal employees must submit a recently completed performance appraisal (dated within 18 months) showing the official rating of record, signed by a supervisor, or statement why the performance appraisal is unavailable.

- *Note*: Do not submit the entire performance plan. Submit only the appraisal showing your rating.
- If you do not include the performance appraisal or a statement indicating why it is unavailable, your application may be considered incomplete, resulting in non-referral.

Verifying Documents Are Attached

Ensure that documents intended for your application package are uploaded and will open without error by following these steps:

1. Review the Application Summary page and ensure all questions have been answered correctly and all required documents were uploaded. You will see a link to the uploaded documents. Click on the link for each document to ensure they open without error.

<div align="center">OR</div>

2. Sign into your USAJOBS account, click on "Application Status" on the left side of your account page.

3. Locate the job announcement you are applying to and click on "More Information". This will take you to a page where you will be able to view the documents submitted for the job.

4. Click on the link for each document to ensure they open without error.