

REE Hiring Flexibilities

**Research Education and Economics
Human Resources Division
Human Resources Operations
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Short-term Staffing Options

| | |
|---|-----|
| Competitive Temporary Appointments..... | 1 |
| Competitive Term Appointments..... | 1 |
| Details..... | 1 |
| Expert and Consultant Appointments..... | 1 |
| Faculty Member Appointments..... | 1 |
| Intergovernmental Personnel Act Mobility Program (IPA)..... | 1-2 |
| Letter of Authorization Appointment (L/A) (ARS)..... | 2 |
| Post Doctoral Research Associate Program (ARS and ERS)..... | 2 |
| Private Sector Temporaries..... | 3 |
| Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP)..... | 3 |
| Thirty-Day Critical Needs Appointment Authority..... | 3 |

Long-term Staffing Options

| | |
|--|---|
| Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP)..... | 4 |
| Persons with Disabilities..... | 4 |
| Presidential Management Fellows (PMF)..... | 4 |
| Readers, Interpreters and Other Personal Assistants..... | 5 |
| Student Career Experience Program (SCEP)..... | 5 |
| USDA Direct Hire Authority..... | 6 |
| Veterans Appointment of 30% or More Disabled..... | 6 |
| Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA)..... | 6 |
| Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA) | 7 |

Alternate Staffing Options

Job-Sharing.....7

Modified Qualifications.....7

Re-employed Annuitants.....7

Short-term Staffing Options

Competitive Temporary Appointments

Temporary appointments may be used for short-term needs not expected to last longer than one year. Recruitment is accomplished through the competitive process. (5 CFR part 316, subpart D)

Competitive Term Appointments

Term appointments may be used for more than one and up to four years when the need for the employee's services is not permanent, including but not limited to: project work; extraordinary workload; scheduled abolishment, reorganization, or contracting out of the function; uncertainty of future funding; or the need to maintain permanent positions for placement of employees who would otherwise be displaced from other parts of the organization. Recruitment is accomplished through the competitive process. (5 CFR part 316, subpart D)

Details

This allows for employees to be detailed within USDA for temporary periods in intervals of 120 days. Details to higher graded positions in excess of 120 days require competitive procedures. (5 U.S.C. 3341)

Expert and Consultant Appointments

Agencies may employ experts and consultants to perform temporary (not to exceed one year) or intermittent work. An expert is someone who is specifically qualified by education and experience to perform difficult and challenging tasks in a particular field beyond the usual range of achievement. A consultant is someone who can provide valuable and pertinent advice generally drawn from a high degree of broad administrative, professional, or technical knowledge or experience. (5 CFR part 304)

Faculty Member Appointments

This allows for the filling of temporary positions not to exceed 130 working days a year of a scientific, professional, or analytical nature. The selectee must be a bona fide member of the faculty of an accredited college or university having special qualifications for the position to which appointed. (5 CFR 213.3102(o))

Intergovernmental Personnel Act Mobility Program (IPA)

The Intergovernmental Personnel Act Mobility Program (IPA) allows agencies to bring in temporary assignees from state and local governments, colleges and universities, Indian tribal governments, and eligible not-for-profit organizations under the IPA Program. Initial assignments of up to two-years may be made for the mutual benefit of the Federal Government and the non-Federal entity. Assignments may be extended for an additional two years, allowing for a maximum term of 4 consecutive years. Assignees are either temporarily appointed to the

Federal agency or serve while on detail. Cost-sharing arrangements for mobility assignments are negotiated between the participating organizations. The Federal agency may agree to pay all, some, or none of the costs associated with the assignment such as basic pay, supplemental pay, benefits, and travel and relocation expenses.

An agreement must be approved between the non-Federal organization and the Department of Agriculture. Approval of the Administrator is required if the government is paying 50% or less of the expenses. Departmental clearance is required if the government is paying more than 50% of the expenses. (5 CFR part 334)

See REE P&P 422.2 at <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ppweb/422-02.HTM> for more detailed information.

Letter of Authorization Appointment (L/A)

The L/A authority is an *ARS specific* excepted service hiring authority that is published each year as a Federal Register Notice. The L/A authority covers field assistant type positions in temporary, intermittent or seasonal employment in positions at or below GS-7 and WG-10. Schedules permitted include full-time, part-time and intermittent. Appointments made for 130 work days or less in a service year can be filled year after year. Appointments made for 131-180 work days in a service year can only be filled for two consecutive years.

See L/A and STEP Handbook at http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/staffing_recruit/lastep/index.htm for more detailed information.

Postdoctoral Research Associate Program

The objectives of the Postdoctoral Research Associate Program are to supplement the research of ARS scientists and ERS economists and to provide employment opportunities for recent doctoral degree recipients to perform research while receiving advanced training through association with the Agency. In addition, the Postdoctoral Research Associate Program is an important outreach mechanism to identify and create a diverse, multidisciplinary pool of scientist candidates for potential permanent career appointments.

The Postdoctoral Research Associate Program is used to fill positions on a temporary basis for work on a specific project to solve specific problems. It may not be used as an alternative to filling permanent positions. However, Associates are encouraged to consider and compete for permanent career positions in ARS and ERS that are advertised for recruitment. Candidates are employed under an excepted appointment, usually up to 2 years in duration. Positions are normally filled at the GS-11 or GS-12 grade level. Completion of the Ph.D. prior to entrance on duty is a requirement.

Private Sector Temporaries

Temporary help service firms may be used for brief periods (120 days, with extension of additional 120 days) to assist in meeting short-term needs such as the absence of an employee due to an emergency, a critical need that cannot be delayed, or a need that cannot be met through the appointment of a temporary employee. This option may be used only when regular recruitment and hiring procedures are impractical, and the commercial service is purchased through the Federal procurement system. A Statement of Work and a written justification supporting the need for the use of a Private Sector Temporary must be submitted to HRD. Once approved, the requesting office must prepare a Procurement Request form (AD-700) and forward it along with HRD's written authorization and supporting documentation to the appropriate procurement office. (5 CFR part 300, subpart E)

See www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ppd/pdffiles/PM-37-01.PDF for more detailed information.

Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP)

This program covers temporary positions, not to exceed one year or less, at grades GS-1 to GS-15 and positions under the Federal Wage System. STEP is an excepted service hiring authority that does not require use of a vacancy announcement; however, veterans' preference applies (a non-veteran cannot be selected if an eligible, qualified veteran is available). (5 CFR 213.3202(a))

- Appointees must be at least 16 years old and enrolled or accepted for enrollment, at least half-time, as a student in an accredited high school,
- technical or vocational school, or two/four year college/university, graduate, or professional school.
- Appointees are not eligible to be converted to a permanent or term position after graduation (unless the student meets the requirements of and is first converted to a SCEP position).

See REE P&P 413.8 at <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ppweb/pdf/413-08.pdf> for more detailed information.

Thirty-Day Critical Needs Appointment Authority

Positions covered by this authority include temporary and permanent positions for which a critical hiring need exists that must be filled on an interim basis pending completion of the hiring process. Appointments may not exceed 30 days; however; they may be extended for an additional 30 days if continued employment is essential to the agency's operations. It cannot be used to extend the service limit of current temporary employees. Individuals may not be employed under this authority for more than 60 days in a 12-month period.

See http://www.opm.gov/Strategic_Management_of_Human_Capital/fhfr/FLX05040.asp for more detailed information.

Long-term Staffing Options

Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP)

The Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP) is an excepted service hiring authority that does not require use of a vacancy announcement; however, veterans' preference applies. This program helps agencies recruit for and attract exceptional individuals into a variety of occupations at GS-5, 7, and 9 or other trainee levels not covered by the Luevano Consent Decree. Individuals are appointed to a 2-year internship. Assignment of a mentor, formal training plan, and rotational assignment(s) is required. Upon successful completion of the internship, the intern may be converted to the competitive service. (5 CFR 213.3202(o))

See REE P&P 413.9 at <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ppweb/413-9.htm> for more detailed information.

Persons with Disabilities - Mental Retardation, Severe Physical Disabilities and Psychiatric Disabilities

This is an excepted service hiring authority that covers positions at grades GS-1 to GS-15 and positions under the Federal Wage System. It does not require use of a vacancy announcement; however, veterans' preference applies (a non-veteran cannot be selected if an eligible, qualified veteran is available). Persons may be appointed based on proof of disability and job readiness certification (i.e., the applicant is likely to succeed in performing the duties of the position for which he or she is applying) from a licensed medical professional, a licensed vocational rehabilitation specialist or any Federal agency, State agency or agency of the District of Columbia or a U.S. territory that issues or provides disability benefits. Agencies may make temporary, time-limited and permanent appointments under this authority. After completing two years of successful service, employees on continuing appointments are converted to the competitive service. (5 CFR 213.3102(u))

See http://www.opm.gov/disability/hrpro_3-02.asp for more detailed information.

Presidential Management Fellows Program (PMF)

Outstanding graduate students (Masters and doctoral-level) from a wide variety of academic disciplines who have an interest in, and commitment to, a career in the analysis and management of public policies and programs may apply for Federal positions under this program. Presidential Management Fellows may be appointed at the GS-09, GS-11, or GS-12 level (or equivalent).

At least once each year, OPM will announce the availability of Fellow and Senior Fellow appointments and conduct a competition for the selection of finalists. Once selected by the agency, a training plan, mentor, and rotational/developmental assignments are required. Employees are converted to the competitive service after completing two years of successful service. (5 CFR part 362)

See <http://www.pmf.opm.gov/> for more detailed information.

Readers, Interpreters, and other Personal Assistants

Agencies may appoint readers, interpreters, and personal assistants without regard to the normal competitive hiring regulations and processes. Such employees may be appointed directly under an excepted hiring authority without job postings, etc., after identifying an appropriate candidate (5 CFR 213.3102 (II)). Some agencies may also hire such assistants under contractual arrangements

This is an excepted service hiring authority that does not require use of a vacancy announcement; however, veterans' preference applies (a non-veteran cannot be selected if an eligible, qualified veteran is available). Employees hired under this provision may be converted to competitive service when both of the following conditions are met: (1) the person has completed at least one year of satisfactory service in such a position under a non-temporary appointment and (2) employment as a reader, interpreter, or personal assistant is no longer necessary for reasons beyond management's control, e.g., resignation or reassignment of the person being assisted.

See http://www.opm.gov/disability/hrpro_3-02.asp for more detailed information.

Student Career Experience Program (SCEP)

This program covers positions in occupations related to the student's field of study at grades GS-1 to GS-15 and positions under the Federal Wage System. The purpose of this program is to convert students to permanent competitive service positions after graduation; therefore, managers should use this program when future vacancies are anticipated (a target position must be identified). SCEP is an excepted service hiring authority that does not require use of a vacancy announcement; however, veterans' preference applies (a non-veteran cannot be selected if an eligible, qualified veteran is available). (5 CFR 213.3202(b))

- Appointees must be at least 16 years old and enrolled or accepted for enrollment, at least half-time, as a student in an accredited high school, technical or vocational school, or two/four year college/university, graduate, or professional school.
- A written agreement must be executed and signed by the student, an official at the institution, and the selecting official.
- May be converted to a permanent or term position within 120 days after graduation if they have completed 640 hours of career-related work experience under the SCEP Program.

See REE P&P 413.8 at <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ppweb/pdf/413-08.pdf> for more detailed information.

USDA Direct Hire Authority

Positions in the following series/grades connected with the protection of the health and safety of our food supply:

- Animal Health Technician, GS-704-2 through 10
- General Biological Science (Agriculturalist, Biological Scientist, etc.), GS-401-9 through 13
- Biological Science Technician, GS-404-2 through 7
- Microbiologist, GS-403-9 through 13
- Entomologist, GS-414-9 through 13
- Botanist, GS-430-9 through 13
- Plant Pathologist, GS-434-9 through 13
- Ecologist, GS-408-9 through 13

A vacancy announcement is required; however, veterans' preference and rating/ranking procedures are waived. Selections must be made within 30 days of issuing the certificate of eligibles.

Veterans Appointment - 30% or More Disabled

Eligible veterans may be appointed to a non-competitive temporary appointment of more than 60 days or a term appointment to a position in the General Schedule or Federal Wage System. An appointee must be a disabled veteran who has a compensable service-connected disability of 30% or more. The disability must be officially documented by the Department of Defense or the Department of Veterans Affairs.

There is no grade-level limitation for this authority, but the appointee must meet all qualification requirements, including any written test requirement. The agency may convert the employee's appointment, without a break in service, to a career or career-conditional appointment at any time during the employee's temporary or term appointment. (5 U.S.C. 3112; 5 CFR 316.302, 316.402, and 315.707)

See <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/ei4.asp> for more detailed information.

Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA)

The Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA) of 1998, as amended, provides that agencies must allow eligible veterans to apply for positions announced under merit promotion procedures when the agency is recruiting from outside its own workforce.

A VEOA eligible who competes under merit promotion procedures and is selected will be given a career or career-conditional appointment. Veterans' preference is not a factor in these appointments. (5 USC 3304 (f); 5 CFR 315.611; 335.106)

Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA)

Agencies have the authority to appoint veterans in the excepted service under the Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA) authority. This is a special authority under which agencies may appoint an eligible veteran up through the GS-11 or equivalent grade level without competition. An appointee must be a disabled veteran; a veteran who served on active duty in the Armed Forces during a war declared by Congress, or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized; a veteran who, while serving on active duty in the Armed Forces, participated in a military operation for which the Armed Forces Service Medal was awarded; or a veteran separated from active duty within the past 3 years. The appointment is converted to career or career-conditional after 2 years of satisfactory service. (5 CFR part 307)

See <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/ei4.asp> for more detailed information.

Alternate Staffing Options

Job Sharing and Other Than Full-Time Permanent Positions

Making appointments with varying work schedules such as part-time (which may include job-sharing), intermittent, and seasonal is a viable option to manage fluctuating and less than full-time workforce needs. Intermittent work schedules are used only when the nature of the work is sporadic and unpredictable. Seasonal work involves annually recurring periods of work that are expected to last at least six months during a calendar year. The use of varying work schedules may attract applicants who prefer to work less than full-time. (5 CFR part 340)

Modified Qualifications

Modification of an OPM qualification standard involves setting aside requirements in a published qualification standard to place internal employees in a particular position. Minimum education requirements cannot be modified. Modifying a standard may be appropriate when the employee's background includes related experience that provided the KSA's necessary for successful job performance. Extra training and/or skills development may be needed to help the employee adjust to the new position. (General Policies and Instructions in the OPM Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions)

Re-employed Annuitants

Federal employees who have already retired may be re-employed in certain circumstances without the salary offset that would normally apply. Most annuitants who are re-employed continue to receive their annuity, but their salary is offset by the amount of their annuity, and they can earn additional annuity rights with substantial service. However, the retirement law permits an agency to ask OPM to grant a waiver of this offset under certain circumstances. Waivers may be granted on a case-by-case basis for employees in positions for which there is exceptional difficulty in recruiting or retaining a qualified employee or other unusual circumstances. When an annuitant is employed with a waiver, he or she receives full annuity and salary. (5 CFR part 553)