Office of Personnel Management

Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer

Workforce Development Division

Career Transition Resources for Current and Transitioning OPM Employees

This document is prepared in compliance with OPM's Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP).

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Career Transition Resources Overview

Introduction

As the federal government restructures or downsizes, some employees may find themselves transitioning to new public sector jobs or occupations in the private sector.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) recognizes the challenges this kind of change can bring and developed this guide to inform and prepare employees for next steps.

Contact

As you navigate the career transition resources in this document, please send your inquiries on specific subject areas to the appropriate Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO) points of contact listed below.

- **Anti-Harassment Coordinator**
  - (202) 936-3331
  - Anti-harassmentcoordinator@opm.gov
- **Employment and Income Verifications**
  - (800) 367-5690
  - https://theworknumber.com/
- **Employee and Labor Relations**
  - OPMHRELR@opm.gov
- **Learning Connection Learning Management System & eSF-182 Support**
  - LearningConnectionSupport@opm.gov
- **Performance Management (including USA Performance) and Awards**
  - OPMHR-PerformanceAwards@opm.gov
- **Personnel Actions and other Personnel Processing and Records Matters**
  - OPMProcessing@opm.gov

- **Reasonable Accommodations**
  - RA@opm.gov
- **Recruitment/Classification**
  - OPMHRSC@opm.gov
- **Requests under the Family and Medical Leave Act (including Paid Parental Leave)**
  - OPMHRELR@opm.gov
- **Retirement Estimates, Child Care Subsidy Program, Leave, Telework/Remote Work, and other Benefits Programs**
  - OPMBenefits@opm.gov
- **Training and Development Programs**
  - ChiefLearningOfficer@opm.gov
- **Workers' Compensation**
  - OPMBenefits@opm.gov
- **Work-Life and Employee Assistance Program (EAP) (which offers free, confidential professional help with personal/work-related problems)**
  - (800) 222-0364 (24/7 toll-free assistance)
  - http://www.Foh4you.com/
  - https://www.worklife4you.com/index.html
  - Registration Code: opm

Career Transition Programs

Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP)

The Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP) is an intra-agency program that helps surplus or displaced federal employees improve their chances of finding a new job in their agency by giving them selection priority over other applicants if they are considered well qualified for the job.

Learn more about CTAP by accessing OPM's *The Employee's Guide to Career Transition*.

How do I receive selection priority for vacancies in my agency?

If you wish to receive selection priority for vacancies in your agency, you must meet **all** the following criteria:

- Be considered a surplus or displaced employee.
- Have a current performance rating of at least **fully successful** or equivalent.
- Occupy a position in the same local commuting area of the vacancy.
- Apply for a position at or below your current grade level with no greater promotion potential than your current position.
- Meet the application deadline.
- Be found **well qualified** for the vacant position.

What is a "surplus" employee?

You are considered a **surplus** employee if you meet **all** the following criteria:

- Are in the competitive service[1].
- Are in tenure group I (career) or II (career-conditional).
- Have an official notice from your agency stating your position is no longer needed. Examples of this type of notice may include:
    - A Certificate of Expected Separation (CES).
    - An agency certification that are you in a surplus organization or occupation.
    - A notice that your position is being abolished.
    - A letter stating you are eligible for discontinued service retirement.

What is a "displaced" employee?

You are considered a **displaced** employee if you meet **all** the following criteria:

- Are in the competitive service.
- Are in tenure group I (career) or II (career-conditional).
- Have an official notice from your agency stating you will be separated by Reduction in Force (RIF). Examples of this type of notice may include:
    - A specific RIF separation notice.
    - A notice of proposed removal because you declined a directed reassignment or transfer of function outside your local commuting area.

[1] Agencies can extend the definition of a surplus employee to include employees in the excepted service if they are on Schedule A or B appointments without time limit and have received an appropriate notice (see above). Selection priority for these employees is limited to other permanent Schedule A or B positions in the same agency and local commuting area.

Who is NOT eligible for selection priority?

You are generally **not** eligible for selection priority if you are:

- In the excepted service[2] (unless your agency gives special selection priority to excepted service employees).
- Downgraded or reassigned due to a RIF, but not separated.
- Located outside the local commuting area for the vacancy.
- In an agency that is not in the Executive Branch.
- In a temporary or term position in the competitive service.
- In the Senior executive Services (SES).
- In an agency that does not follow OPM hiring procedures. These agencies include:
    - The United States Postal Service (USPS)
    - Legislative Branch agencies
    - Judicial Branch agencies

When does my CTAP eligibility begin?

Your CTAP eligibility begins when you receive one of the following notices or documents:

- A RIF separation notice.
- A notice of proposed removal for declining a directed reassignment or transfer of function to another local commuting area.
- A CES.

[2] Excepted service employees are not eligible for selection priority in other agencies under the Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP).

- Your agency's certification that you are in a surplus organization or occupation. Examples of this type of notice/document may include:
  - A position abolishment letter.
  - A notice of eligibility for discontinued service retirement or similar notice.

Please Note: We advise you to save the notice or document you receive, as it will serve as your official proof of eligibility for CTAP priority.

When does my CTAP eligibility expire?

Your CTAP eligibility expires when **at least one** of the following situations occur:

- Your agency separates you by RIF.
- You resign, retire, or otherwise separate from your agency.
- Your agency separates you for declining a directed reassignment or transfer of function to another local commuting area.
- Your agency cancels or rescinds the notice that made you eligible.
- You move to another position (time-limited or permanent) within the agency that is not affected by the RIF.
- You receive a career, career-conditional, or excepted service position without time limit in any agency.
- You are no longer being separated by RIF.

What is my "local commuting area?"

Your **local commuting area** is the geographic area surrounding the duty station of your position of record. OPM has defined the local commuting area as within 50 miles of a position's duty station. For CTAP, you can only receive selection priority for vacancies announced in your local commuting area.

Please Note: Each federal agency has a specific CTAP with more detailed information about the agency's transition policies. Please contact your human resources office for agency specific information.

Agency Reemployment Priority Lists (RPL)

Agencies must maintain a Reemployment Priority List (RPL) for:

- Competitive service employees facing RIF separation.
- Employees who have already been separated by RIF.
- Employees who have recovered from work-related (compensable) injuries.

What is a Reemployed Priority List (RPL)?

The RPL is a list agencies use to give reemployment priority to a career or career-conditional competitive service employees separated by RIF or due to compensable injury. Under OPM regulations, each agency must establish an RPL for each local commuting area where competitive service employees have either been separated by RIF or have recovered from a work-related injury.

Can I receive hiring preference in other agencies if I am on the RPL?

No. The RPL only provides hiring priority for jobs in your current/former agency in the same local commuting area. It does NOT give you priority for jobs in other agencies.

When am I eligible for the RPL? When does my eligibility expire?

You can register for your agency's RPL when you receive either a specific RIF separation notice or a CES. You must have a rating of at least "minimally successful" or equivalent for your current performance rating. The RPL registration deadline is **30 calendar days** after RIF separation.

Career (Tenure Group I) employees receive two (2) years of rehiring priority starting from the date their name is placed on the agency RPL. Career-Conditional (Tenure Group II) employees receive one (1) year of selection priority.

Your RPL eligibility ends if you:

- Are removed from the RPL by your agency.
- Receive a career, career-conditional, or excepted service appointment without time limitations in any agency.
- Decline a permanent job offer at your current or former grade.
- Decline or fail to appear for a scheduled interview.
- Do not respond to an interview availability inquiry.
- Separate for other reasons (such as retirement or resignation) before the RIF date.

How do I apply for the RPL?

Ask your agency for an RPL application form. You should specify the grade(s), occupations(s), and minimum hours of work per week you would accept, and whether you are interested in temporary and/or term positions.

You may register for as many positions as you like. Your agency human resources specialist can help you identify positions for which you qualify and answer questions about the RPL application.

When is an agency required to consider me through RPL?

You receive priority consideration when your agency seeks to fill competitive service jobs with candidates outside its own workforce. This includes temporary and term positions, if you indicated interest in time-limited jobs on your RPL application.

If you qualify for a vacant job, your agency may not fill the position by:

- A new appointment (unless they appoint a veteran with at least 10-point hiring preference).
- Transferring someone from another federal agency.
- Reinstating a former federal employee (unless they appoint someone with restoration or reemployment rights).

Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan

The Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP) is an interagency program that helps surplus or displaced federal employees improve their chances of finding a new job at another agency (not their current or former agency) by giving them selection priority over other applicants from outside the agency.

Who is eligible for ICTAP?

To receive selection priority in other agencies through ICTAP, your current or last position must be/have been career (Tenure Group I) or career-conditional (Tenure Group II) in the competitive service, and you must fall under one of the following categories:

- **RIF** – You have been (or are being) involuntarily separated from an Executive Branch agency through reduction in force.
- **Transfer of Function/Directed Reassignment** – You have been (or are being) separated under adverse action procedures because you declined a transfer of function or directed reassignment to another local commuting area.
- **Injury Compensation** – You were separated due to a work-related injury; your worker's compensation benefits have stopped because you have recovered; and your former agency is unable to place you through RPL.
- **Disability Annuitant** – You retired with a disability and your annuity has been/will be terminated because OPM considers you recovered.
- **RIF – Retired** – You received a RIF separation notice and elected either optional retirement on the RIF effective date or discontinued service retirement on or before the RIF date.
- **Military/National Guard Technician** – You were a Military Reserve or National Guard Technician and now receive a special OPM disability retirement annuity.

How do I receive selection priority for vacancies in other agencies?

To receive selection priority for vacancies in other agencies, you must meet **all** the following criteria:

- Have a current performance rating of at least **fully successful** or equivalent. This requirement does not apply if you qualify for ICTAP due to injury compensation or disability annuity.
- Occupy (or have been separated from) a position in the same local commuting area of the vacancy.
- Apply for a specific vacancy at or below the grade level from which you are being (or have been) separated that does not have greater promotion potential than your last position.
- Meet the application deadline.
- Be found **well qualified** for the position.

Who is not eligible for selection priority?

You are generally **not** eligible for selection priority if you:

- Are in the excepted service (unless you are covered under a separate law that gave you ICTAP eligibility).
- Downgraded or reassigned involuntarily, but did not separate.
- Are in a different local commuting area from the vacancy.
- Are in a temporary or term position in the competitive service.
- Are in agency that is not in the Executive Branch.
- Are in an agency that does not follow OPM hiring procedures (this includes Postal Service, legislative and judicial branch agencies).
- Are in the SES.

When does my ICTAP eligibility begin?

Your ICTAP eligibility begins when you receive one of the following documents:

- A RIF separation notice.
- A notice of proposed removal for declining a directed reassignment or transfer of function to another local commuting area.
- An OPM notice that your disability annuity has been (or will be) terminated.
- Certification from your former agency that it cannot place you after your recovery from a compensable injury.
- Certification from the National Guard Bureau or Military Department that you are eligible for a disability retirement and will receive the special OPM annuity.

Please Note: We advise you to save the notice or document you receive, as it will serve as your official proof of eligibility for ICTAP priority.

When does my ICTAP eligibility expire?

Your ICTAP eligibility expires:

- One (1) year after your RIF separation.
- One (1) year after your agency separates you for declining a directed reassignment or transfer of function to another local commuting area.
- One (1) year after your agency certifies that they cannot place you after your recovery from a compensable injury.
- One (1) year after you are notified that your disability annuity has been or is being terminated.
- When you receive a career, career-conditional, or excepted service position without time limit in any agency.
- When your agency cancels or rescinds your RIF or removal notice.
- If you move to another position, time-limited or permanent, before the RIF date.
- If you separate by resignation or non-discontinued service retirement before the RIF effective date.

- With a specific agency, if you decline a permanent offer from that agency.
    - For example, if you work for the Department of Defense and receive a RIF separation notice, you can apply for a competitive service job in the local commuting area at the Department of Education.

Skills Overview

Skills Overview Introduction

Navigating job loss can be a daunting experience, yet it also opens doors to new beginnings. We recognize the challenges inherent in this transition, and we are committed to offering support throughout your journey.

To aid in your transition, we have assembled a selection of resources tailored to facilitate self-exploration and development. This selection includes career assessments, skill-enhancement activities, and personality tests, all designed to help identify and articulate your unique strengths, work style, and potential. Engaging with these tools will provide you with a deeper understanding of your professional capabilities and how to utilize them in future career pursuits.

This guide's recommended resources aim to assist you in gaining a comprehensive understanding of your skills and strengths, providing a clear and purposeful direction for your career journey.

Importance of Skill Identification

Gaining a comprehensive understanding of your distinct strengths, personality traits, and job skills is crucial in aligning your career path with your abilities and aspirations. Your inherent talents, work style, and personal attributes significantly influence your workplace contributions and job satisfaction. By pinpointing your key competencies - be it problem-solving, communication, leadership, or creativity - you can strategically target roles that complement your strengths.

This level of self-awareness not only enhances your appeal to potential employers, but it also equips you with the knowledge to make informed career decisions, fostering long-term success and fulfillment.

Please Note: The resources provided in the subsequent sections serve solely for informational purposes and should not be construed as an endorsement or recommendation by OPM. Our aim is to offer beneficial resources; however, we urge individuals to exercise due diligence in assessing the suitability of any product or service for their unique needs. OPM disclaims any responsibility for the quality, effectiveness, or results stemming from the utilization of these resources.

Free Skills Resources

Skills Matcher

Website: Skills Matcher | Careers | CareerOneStop

CareerOneStop, a career exploration site managed by the U.S. Department of Labor, offers a tool called Skills Matcher which allows you to rate yourself on 40 key workplace skills. At the conclusion of the assessment, the tool will match you with careers based on your responses.

NERIS Type Explorer®

Website: Free Personality Test | 16Personalities

NERIS Analytics Limited has created a free resource called the NERIS Type Explorer® aimed at helping you build more meaningful relationships by learning your personality type and what drives you.

Paid Skills Resources

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI)

Website: Official Myers Briggs Test & Personality Assessment | MBTIonline

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI) is a popular assessment that offers multiple ways to understand yourself and others based on various traits including:

- Personality preferences.
- Behavior.
- Communication habits.

Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness (DiSC) Assessment

Websites: DiSCprofile.com - DiSC Profile | Home - Take Flight Learning

The Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness (DiSC) Assessment is a widely used behavioral tool used by individuals and organizations to help improve relationships, teamwork, communication, and productivity in the workplace and other areas of life. This tool measures your personality based on four themes:

- **Dominance** – The tendency to be confident and focus on accomplishing bottom-line results.
- **Influence** – The tendency to be open and focus mainly on relationships with others.
- **Steadiness** – The tendency to be dependable and focus mainly on cooperation and sincerity.
- **Conscientiousness** – The tendency to be analytical and focus mainly on quality, accuracy, expertise, and competency.

CliftonStrengths® Assessment

Website: Compare CliftonStrengths Assessment Options | EN - Gallup

Psychologist and educator Don Clifton created the CliftonStrengths® Assessment to help you:

- Discover your natural talents.
- Learn how to turn your natural talents into strengths.
- Use your strengths to maximize your potential.

Emotional Intelligence (EQ) Appraisal

Website: Emotional Intelligence Assessment & EQ Test | TalentSmartEQ

Emotional intelligence (EQ) refers to the extent to which you display strength in the following areas:

- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Social awareness
- Relationship management

Writing a Resume and Cover Letter

U.S. Office of Personnel Management

Writing a Resume and Cover Letter Introduction

During a career transition, an impactful representation of oneself through a resume and cover letter becomes paramount. Crafting well-articulated documents that underscore your skills, experience, and value proposition can significantly enhance your appeal to potential employers. This section furnishes practical advice designed to distinguish you in a competitive job market.

Resume

Chronological or General Resume

This is the most common type of resume. Chronological resumes list jobs and experiences in reverse chronological order, from most recent to least. This format is most appropriate when many of your recent roles are relevant to the jobs for which you are applying.

Functional Resume

This format uses categories to separate job experiences, skills, qualifications, etc. Using this format allows you to bring attention to the experiences most relevant to the jobs you are applying to, rather than the most recent job you have held. This format is a great approach for career changers or anyone who has valuable part-time, volunteer or internship positions, or training/education that is not included in their most recent full-time job. Examples of categories might include management, sales, human resources, technology, research etc.

Resume Writing Tips

- Keep resume length 1-2 pages. This varies depending on your work history and relevant experience.
- Focus on results. Ensure your bullet points convey what was accomplished.
- When possible, use specific metrics.

- Remove federal acronyms and other federal-specific terms (spell out acronyms if you must use them).
- Use similar language from the job post to describe your skills.
- Read the job description. Research the company. Tailor your resume to each job, even if you only make minor revisions.
- Send your documents out for review.
- Start with someone in that industry, if that's not possible, choose a colleague, friend or family member. Having someone review your documents for typos or grammar is helpful even if they cannot provide content-specific feedback.

Cover Letter

What to Include

Include a cover letter in your application materials, whenever possible. A cover letter gives you the opportunity to elaborate on your skills and experiences. It also allows you to personalize your application materials and connect to the company's mission and values.

- **Include a strong opening**. Your first sentence grabs the reader's attention. Mention the role you are applying for specifically and express your enthusiasm for the opportunity.
- **Show your value**. In your main paragraph, be sure to include your skills and experience and how they will add value in the position. Provide a specific example to bring your skillset to life.
- **Keep it concise**. A cover letter should not be any longer than one page. It should be short, direct, and concise, making the reader want to jump into your resume to learn more.
- **Use a professional tone**. While you want to show your enthusiasm, remember to maintain a formal tone. Avoid using overly casual language but still aim to sound personable.
- **Close with confidence**. End by thanking the employer for consideration, summarizing your qualifications, and call to action, such as an interview.

Additional Resources

Indeed

Website: Indeed

Indeed is job search platform, hosting millions of global job listings. Users can easily search for jobs using keywords, job titles, or company names, and apply directly through the site. The platform also enables resume uploads and provides job alerts, company reviews, salary comparisons, and a resume builder. Indeed serves as a link between job seekers and employers, fostering new employment opportunities.

LinkedIn

Website: LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a leading professional networking platform that connects professionals worldwide. It allows users to create a professional profile, share career updates, post and apply for jobs, and engage with industry-specific content. LinkedIn also enables networking by connecting with colleagues, potential employers, and industry leaders. It's a powerful tool for career advancement and professional development, widely used by individuals and businesses alike.

Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL)

Website: Purdue University Online Writing Lab

Purdue OWL is a comprehensive free resource for writing guidelines and instructional material. It offers extensive information on various writing styles, grammar, punctuation, and citation formats. It's an invaluable tool for individuals seeking guidance on academic writing, research, and citation. Purdue OWL is widely recognized for its easy-to-understand guides and is frequently used as a reference in many academic and professional settings.

New York State Department of Labor

Website: [New York State Department of Labor]

The New York State Department of Labor's website offers a robust resource on resumes, cover letters, and job applications. It provides comprehensive guides and tips to help job seekers prepare effective resumes and cover letters, and successfully navigate the job application process. The website's user-friendly interface and practical advice make it a valuable tool for individuals seeking employment or looking to advance their careers.

Social Networking

U.S. Office of Personnel Management

Social Networking Introduction

Establishing connections with professionals, peers, and organizations within your industry via social media and other platforms can pave the way for referrals, mentorships, and potential job opportunities. A significant number of positions are filled through personal referrals rather than public advertisements. By maintaining an active presence on platforms such as LinkedIn, Indeed, Handshake, and others, you can broaden your career prospects.

Why Social Networking?

- **Personal Branding** – create a strong professional presence online showcasing your skills and experience. Be sure to create and share content that aligns with your personal brand and career goals
- **Recruiter Reach** – recruiters use platforms like LinkedIn and Handshake to search for early career individuals and find potential candidates. By maintaining an up-to-date profile and an obvious personal brand on your professional social media, you catch the attention of the right recruiters.
- **Industry News** – Social networks are a great opportunity to stay current with companies and industry leaders. These professional share content relevant to your job search and information that may be important to help you stand out in the job market.
- **Online Communities** – LinkedIn has groups that are specific to industries and job fields, as well as other niche groups, such as alumni organizations or geographical location. Connecting in these groups is a great way to grow your online presence in a way that aligns with your career goals.
- **Direct Contact** – Connect with recruiters, hiring managers, and industry leaders directly.

Setting Up Your Social Media Account

- Choose the right platform. LinkedIn is a popular choice, but other networks like Handshake, Indeed, Glassdoor, or Facebook may be options. Make sure you're choosing a platform that works with your career industry. For example, the tech industry may utilize GitHub more than LinkedIn.

- Tailor your presence to the platform. Be sure to review other professionals in your career field on that social media platform and align with the standard. For example, a family picture may be appropriate on Facebook, but not commonly seen on LinkedIn.
- Use a high-quality headshot.
- Keep the language in your content clear and concise.
- Tailor your tone based on the platform.
- Use different media to showcase your talent or portfolio. Include links, when possible, to highlight your skills and work experience.
- Be active and consistent. While job searching, be sure to log in daily to engage with content that aligns with your personal brand and career goals.
- Make sure your engagement is professional.
- Review and set your privacy settings to a level your level of comfort.
- Use hashtags and keywords that will help you stand out to recruiters and potential collaborators.
- Be yourself and demonstrate how you stand out from the crowd.

Interviewing Techniques

U.S. Office of Personnel Management

Interviewing Techniques Introduction

Preparing for an interview is equally as important as crafting a robust resume and cover letter. The following section outlines general strategies for interview preparation. Furthermore, interviews can take various forms, and adjusting your approach based on the interview type can be crucial. Specific guidance for navigating different types of interviews is also provided in this section.

General Strategies

Before the Interview

Research the company.

- Focus on their mission and values.
- Look for information on their strategic plan or organizational goals.
- Gaining a strong understanding of the company will help you choose experiences to talk about that align with their goals.

Review your resume and reflect on your experiences, skills, etc.

- Be prepared to talk about any of the items on your resume and how they translate to the company for which you are interviewing.
- Review your cover letter; expand on the examples you covered.

Know the role.

- Read the job description multiple times. Try to envision what the role would look like at that company.
- Align your resume to the qualifications listed on the job posting.

Practice your answers.

- Saying answers out loud helps refine your responses. Practicing out loud also commits responses to memory, which can be helpful during an interview, when you might be nervous.
- Use the job description to come up with questions the interviewers might ask.

- Ensure you have examples prepared for each of the requirements listed on the job.
- STAR is a great method to prepare your responses, think of a situation, the task you were given in that situation, the action you applied and what skill you utilized, and the impact or result.

Prepare questions.

- Use what you've learned from research to develop specific questions about the role or the company.
- Try to avoid questions that can be answered in 1–2-word responses.
- Don't focus solely on administrative questions – use this time to gain a deeper understanding of the role, what is being asked of the new hire and if you are a good fit for the company.

Choose an outfit.

- Prepare your outfit early so that you can make any adjustments.
- Be sure your outfit is comfortable and appropriate based on the type of interview (sitting, standing, a walking tour, a virtual environment).
- Feeling comfortable will help with confidence.

During the Interview

Be prepared to deliver your 'elevator pitch' for introductions. Most interviews will start out with some version of "tell me about yourself." Prepare a brief, 1–3-minute, response that highlights a little about your background and how you got to this point. If you're comfortable, you can also add a personal detail.

Keep your responses on track.

- Consider structuring your responses in some version of the STAR method:
  - ***Situation*** – Give an overview of the situation you were in.
  - ***Task*** – What was the task being asked of you?
  - ***Action*** – What actions did you take to accomplish the task?
  - ***Result*** – What were the results? Use specific metrics whenever possible.

Be authentic.

- Give genuine answers and be yourself.
- If you cannot think of a response immediately, take a breath and take a few seconds to think about the question. You do not have to start talking as soon as the question has been asked.
- If it is a multiple part question and you forget the 2nd part, ask for clarification or to repeat the question.

Be mindful of time.

- Generally, answers should be around 3 minutes. This time limit helps keep your responses focused, without going off track.
- Depending on the type of interview, you may have more or less time to respond. Be aware of your time as you progress through the interview.
- You should leave enough time to ask your questions. The interviewers might have a hard stop at the end of your scheduled time.

Ask questions.

- Come prepared with 5-7 questions to choose from. Some of your questions are likely to be answered during the interview, so it's best to have back-ups.
- Adjust your questions based on what you've learned during the interview.
- It is acceptable to bring your typed or written questions typed or written and to bring them out and take notes during this portion of the interview.
- Some examples include questions about team maturity, organizational structure, goals, vision, strengths or challenges of the work unit, etc.

After the Interview

Once the question portion has ended, if the hiring committee has not given an overview of the next steps in their process, be sure to ask.

Thank everyone for their time once the interview has completed.

- Review your interview. Jot down what went well and what was challenging. If there were specific questions that you struggled with, try to formulate a new response.

- It's important to do this as soon as possible, following the interview, when everything is still fresh in your mind.

Send a follow-up email to everyone with whom you interviewed.

- Thank them for the opportunity.
- Share something that stood out to you during the interview (their company culture, a specific part of the job, etc.).

Types of Interviews

Screening Call

This type of interview is generally done by a recruiter for the company. It is usually short, 15-30 minutes, and is used to get to know you and make sure both parties are aligned with some of the key aspects and expectations of the job.

Topics

- An overview of the role
- Your background and your interest in the role/company
- Your qualifications for the role
- Logistics
    - Hiring process/timeline
    - Work environment (office, hybrid, remote)
    - Company culture and an overview of benefits
    - Early salary discussions – you may be told a range or may be asked to give a range.
- Ask questions that are big picture, and not too job task specific, a recruiter will not always know the unique day-to-day activities.

Tips

- Review the company's mission, values, their company culture, etc.

- Review the job description. Align your skills and experiences with the top qualifications listed.
- Be prepared to discuss salary. Lookup salaries for roles at similar companies.

Panel Interview

This interview type will usually involve 3-4 members of the hiring team. Most commonly, the hiring team will include the direct supervisor. Other members of the team might include a member of the organization's leadership team, the supervisor's direct reports, or other employees with similar responsibilities. The team will usually take turns asking pre-determined interview questions, with the possibility of follow-up questions, depending on your answer.

Topics

- These questions will usually focus on the specific qualifications listed on the job description.
- Typically, interviewers will ask you to give examples of times you demonstrated specific skills or had specific outcomes.
- Be prepared to answer questions about your strengths, areas of growth or situations you may have struggled with in previous roles.
- Review the tips listed in the General Strategies section; those are most appropriate for panel interviews.

Technical Interview

Technical interviews are used for positions that require very specific skillsets. Employers may want to review candidates' skills prior to an interview or following an interview but prior to a job offer. Technical interviews are common in fields such as technology, healthcare, engineering and science. A candidate may also be asked to deliver a presentation as part of a technical interview.

Tips

- Review all instructions before proceeding. With technical interviews it is crucial to follow the guidelines set by the hiring officials. This includes any time limits, or limitations of the resources you may use to perform the task.
- Practice the skills you know, or the skills on which you think you may be tested. Ensure that you can complete these tasks from memory, if required.
- If delivering a presentation, practice with family and friends. Be sure that the content aligns with what was requested and adhere to the time limit.

Community Resources

U.S. Office of Personnel Management

Community Resources Introduction

Navigating a career change can be both exciting and challenging. Fortunately, numerous community resources are available to provide guidance, support, and tools for individuals in transition. These resources are designed to help individuals assess their skills, explore new career opportunities, enhance their employability, and provide support during a transition period.

The following resources provide a toolkit for individuals to decrease stress and tap into resources available.

Community Resources

Career OneStop

Website: Career OneStop

- Career Assessments
- Training and certifications
- Job search
- Local job centers and unemployment information
- State and local resource finder

USA.gov

Website: USA.gov

- Unemployment benefit information
- Financial resources

Veteran and Military Spouse Resources

Free LinkedIn Premium for Veterans and Military Spouses

- Veterans
- Military Spouses

Institute for Veterans and Military Families

Website: Institute for Veterans and Military Families

Free certification programs

Military OneSource

Website: Military OneSource

- Job readiness training
- Counseling
- Job Training

Military Spouse Employment Partnership

Website: Military Spouse Employment Partnership

- Job Board
- Counseling
- Career Resources

Veterans Affairs Employment Resources

Website: Veterans Affairs Employment Resources

- Veteran Employment Center
- Resources for Veterans

Separation and Benefits

U.S. Office of Personnel Management

Separation and Benefits Introduction

This section provides guidance and resources for individuals navigating separation from federal service. Here, you will find information to assist you in understanding separation procedures and the impact of separation on your benefits.

Our goal is to help you navigate this often-complex process with ease and confidence. We understand the numerous questions and concerns that arise when considering or undergoing separation from federal service, and we're here to provide the answers and support you need.

Non-Retirement Separation Information

Overview

This section contains the procedures you should follow as you prepare to separate from OPM. In providing this information, OCHCO aims to help facilitate a smooth offboarding process for you once you are ready to begin your new career journey outside of OPM.

What is Separation?

In government terms, separation refers to the end of an employee's service with a government agency or organization for various reasons including, but not limited to:

- Retirement
- Resignation
- Termination
- Transfer to Another Agency
- Completion of a Temporary Appointment

Please Note: If you have questions on exit procedures or submitting a resignation letter, please contact your supervisor and your administrative officer.

Exit Clearance Procedures

Please follow the guidance below to ensure all tasks are completed before your departure.

Guidance for Departing Employees

- Contact your immediate supervisor to let them know of your decision to resign.
    - Please give two weeks' notice to allow adequate time to complete the required Exit Clearance procedures.
    - Your timecard will be processed by your administrative officer following your departure.
- Return your equipment.
    - You may ship your equipment or return it in-person.
    - If you need return your equipment by shipping, you must notify your administrative officer of the type of equipment will return to ensure you receive the proper shipping materials and labels.
    - If you plan to return your equipment in person, it is important to coordinate the equipment return with your administrative officer.
- Return your Personnel Identity Verification (PIV) card to the Security Office.
    - If you are shipping your equipment, you may mail your PIV card to the address listed on the back of the card.
    - If you are returning your equipment in person, you may bring your PIV card to the physical Security Office of your assigned OPM office.
- Complete the Exit Survey provided by OCHCO.

Guidance for Supervisors, Administrative Officers, and Departing Employees

Preliminary Actions

If you are the supervisor or administrative officer of a departing employee, please follow the guidance below by sending an email to the responsible Exit Clearance Points of Contact (POCs) and using their email responses as proof of clearance.

- Arrange for the departing employee to return their equipment either by mail or in-person.
- Ensure the departing employee turns in their PIV card either by mail (to the address on the back of the card) or in person (to the physical Security Office at their assigned OPM office).
- Send an email to SystemAccessControl@opm.gov with the date and time network/system access should be terminated for the departing employee.

Completing the Exit Clearance Form

- OCHCO will email the employee a fillable, PDF Exit Clearance Form (OPM4754A) to complete, along with additional information on exit procedures and points of contact.
- The employee must return the completed and signed Exit Clearance Form to you. You must then return the completed and signed form to OPMHumanResources@opm.gov.
- You can sign the Exit Clearance Form as a responsible POC if you have the approval emails from the below POCs.

Exit Clearance POCs

Office of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) Help Desk

- The help desk POC for the Exit Clearance Form and hardware is CSManagers@opm.gov.
- The shipping address (different from the address on the Exit Clearance Form) is:

  Office of Personnel Management

ATTN: Asset Equipment Return

Room: SB466A

1900 E Street, NW

Washington, DC 20415

- Send an email to SystemAccessControl@opm.gov with the date and time the departing employee's system access should be terminated.

OCHCO Human Capital Management Services

OCHCO will send an Exit Survey to the departing employee approximately two weeks before the separation effective date; this email will serve as the official clearance.

Government Purchase Card Support

- If the departing employee has a purchase card, please send an email to PurchaseCardSupport@opm.gov.
- Departing employees do not need to return their purchase cards, but they must ensure the purchase card is properly destroyed using a shredder or scissors.

Facilities, Security, and Emergency Management (FSEM)

- **POC**: TRB-Facilities-Requests@opm.gov
- Departing employees with an active security clearance or questions regarding their clearance status should contact FSEM Personnel Security at Personnel.Group@opm.gov *at least five business days before their departure* to request a security debriefing.

Center for Financial Services

The supervisor or administrative officer must notify each of the following POCs of the employee's departure date:

- **Travel POC** – Travel@opm.gov
- **Transit Benefits POC** – TransitBenefits@opm.gov
- **Time and Attendance POC** – TimeandAttendance@opm.gov

- **OCFO Systems POC** – DelphiSysAccess@opm.gov

Please Note: Employees do not need to return travel cards or transit/fare subsidy cards. Please ensure these cards are properly destroyed via shredder or scissors.

Office of General Counsel

The supervisor or administrative officer should notify the following POC of the employee's departure date:

Litigation Hold/Record Retention POC – OGCAtty@opm.gov

If the departing employee has an official passport:

- The supervisor or administrative officer should notify OPMHumanResources@opm.gov of the employee's departure date.
- The departing employee must return the passport pursuant to the instructions provided by their supervisor or administrative officer.

If the departing employee has a Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS) card:

- **POC** – Emergency Management (COOPSetup@opm.gov)
- The supervisor or administrative officer must notify the POC of the employee's departure date.
- The Emergency Management POC will close the departing employee's account.
- Employees do not need to return GETS cards. Please ensure these cards are properly destroyed via shredder or scissors.

If the departing employee has a security clearance:

The supervisor or administrative officer must contact the below POC to ensure there are no classified documents assigned to the departing employee. If there are classified documents assigned to the departing employee, a review will be conducted to keep or destroy the documents.

POC – USOPMSR@opm.gov

Federal Employee Benefits After Separation

Overview

This section addresses frequently asked questions (FAQs) regarding employee benefits following separation from federal service. Here you can find answers to FAQs on the following topics:

- Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB)
- Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI)
- Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS)
- Deferred Retirement
- Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)
- Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP)
- Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs)
- Federal Employees Dental & Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP)
- Leave Balances, System Access, and Contact Information

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What happens to my Federal Employee's Health Benefits (FEHB) coverage after separation?

Your FEHB coverage terminates on the last day of the pay period in which you separate, but you remain covered for 31 days after the effective date at no cost. After the 31-day period, you have two options:

- **Option 1**: The Temporary Continuation of Coverage (TCC) Program allows you to continue your health benefits coverage for up to 18 months. To enroll, complete

Standard Form (SF) 2809, Health Benefits Election Form, and submit it to OPMBenefits@opm.gov within 60 days of your separation date.

  - Under TCC, you will pay both the employee and the employer share of the health benefits premium plus a 2% administrative fee directly to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Finance Center (NFC).
  - You can find more information about the TCC Program in the FEHB Handbook.

- **Option 2**: Convert to an individual (non-group) contract without evidence of good health, effective on the day after the 31-day temporary extension of coverage ends. You will work with your current insurance carrier to learn more of this option.
  - For more information and instructions regarding Option 2, please call the phone number on the back on your insurance card.

What happens to my Federal Employee's Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) after separation?

Your FEGLI coverage terminates on the date you separate; however, you are entitled to a free 31-day extension of coverage and conversion privilege to a nongroup policy. You can apply to convert all or any part of your Basic and Optional insurance to an individual policy without a medical examination. Complete SF-2819, Notice of Conversion Privilege, and submit to FEGLI within 31 days following your separation date. OPM will include this form with your separation package.

What happens to my Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) Benefits after separation?

You have two options for your FERS benefits:

- **Option 1**: Apply for a refund of your retirement contributions by completing SF-3106, Application for Refund of Retirement Deductions, and submit it to:
  - Attention: OPM Retirement Services at U.S. Office of Personnel Management | Retirement Operations Center | Post Office Box 45 | Boyers, PA 16017
- **Option 2**: Leave your FERS contributions in the retirement fund to qualify for an annuity in the future, known as Deferred Retirement.

Please Note: If you receive a refund and then later return to federal service, you must pay a redeposit of the amount that was refunded along with any interest accrued for this time to be creditable for retirement computation purposes.

What are the conditions for Deferred Retirement?

You can apply for a deferred annuity once you reach the age of 62 or the Minimum Retirement Age (MRA), provided you have the necessary years of service to qualify for your retirement benefit.

To determine your MRA, and to find additional information on Deferred Retirement eligibility, you can visit OPM's Eligibility webpage. You can also find eligibility criteria and details in the *Applying for Deferred or Postponed Retirement* section within the FERS pamphlet.

What are the conditions for Discontinued Service Retirement?

The Discontinued Service Retirement (DSR) provides an immediate annuity for employees who are involuntarily separated, given they meet certain age and service criteria. These criteria include being 50 years old with 20 years of creditable service or having 25 years of creditable service at any age.

Involuntary separation refers to any termination against the employee's will, excluding cases of misconduct or delinquency. Common causes include reduction in force or relocation of a unit outside the original commuting area. Note: Employees declining reasonable job offers or under a general mobility agreement are not eligible for this retirement option. In cases where the employee chooses to decline a reasonable offer or does not comply with a directed reassignment, they would not qualify for DSR.

What happens to my Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) after separation?

You can no longer make contributions to the TSP after you separate from federal service, but the funds may remain in your account if the balance is more than $200.00. You can find more details by visiting www.tsp.gov. Please wait 30 days post-separation for TSP withdrawal options, which you will be able to access by logging on to your TSP account.

Refer to this fact sheet released by TSP in February 2025 for more information about your TSP benefits as you separate from federal service.

What happens to my Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP) after separation?

Your FLTCIP coverage remains in effect as long as you continue to pay the premiums.

What happens to my Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs) after separation?

FSAs terminate on your separation date, with only pre-separation expenses being reimbursable.

What happens to my Federal Employee’s Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) after separation?

If you're ineligible for an immediate annuity upon separation, your FEDVIP coverage will end on the final day of the last pay period for which premiums were collected.

What happens to my sick leave and annual leave after separation?

If you are ineligible for an immediate annuity upon separation, your sick leave is retained an account. If you later return to federal service, you will receive full credit for your remaining sick leave balance. If you’re eligible for an immediate annuity, the remainder of your sick leave as of your retirement date will be converted into time and added to your total years of creditable service. This service, inclusive of the sick leave, will then be used to calculate your annuity.

Your annual leave will be paid out as a lump sum within one to two pay periods post-separation. The federal withholding for lump sum payments is taxed at 22%, while the state withholding is taxed at 4%, where applicable.

How can I access my Earnings and Leave Statements and W-2 information on Employee Express after separation?

Before separation, you must register for a Login.gov account. This account will allow you to access your Earnings and Leave Statements and W-2 information on Employee Express for up to three years after your separation.

Can I access my electronic official personnel folder (eOPF) after separation?

Unfortunately, your access to the eOPF ceases upon separation. We advise you to print any necessary documents from your eOPF before your departure.

What does the Separation Package contain?

The Separation Package is sent via secure email to your personal email address and contains the following items:

- SF-50 Notification of Personnel Action
- SF-8 (Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees Program)
- A change of address form
- Ethics Information for Departing Federal Employees
- Your last Earnings & Leave Statement
- Conversion forms for Federal Employees Group Life Insurance, if applicable
- Termination notification for Federal Employees Health Insurance, if applicable
- A personalized letter detailing all separation options