

EMPLOYER INSIGHTS

Diligent Research Will Help Students Discover Federal Career Possibilities

Each month, we interview an employer about a key career issue college students—and career services professionals—need to better understand ... from the employer's perspective.

The Employer: Kim Ainsworth, Executive Director of the Greater Boston Federal Executive Board.

The Issue: Federal government jobs are out there for college students and recent grads—if they know where to look.

In a recent article, you said (in the context of federal government employment opportunities): “As a result of retirements, we are doing a lot of hiring—a massive amount of hiring.” Can you elaborate?

The federal government is the nation's largest employer, with 2.1 million employees in 250 federal agencies. Currently, half of the federal workforce is eligible to retire, and agencies are doing more succession planning as a result. Recent statistics indicate that this trend will likely continue for the next three to five years.

What can college students and recent grads do to become better informed about federal job possibilities?

There are many wonderful opportunities right now, so it's a good time to find the job you really want. Here are some specific ways that students/grads can get started:

1) **Visit www.usajobs.gov** and use the site as a baseline for your job search. By law, all competitive service jobs must be posted on this site.

2) **Visit www.makingthedifference.org**, a site produced by the nonprofit Partnership for Public Service. It's designed for students, and it offers advice on everything from conducting an effective federal job search to creating a solid federal resume.

3) **Review special hiring programs.** Many federal agencies use career-entry initiatives, like the Federal Career Intern Program and the Presidential Management

Fellows Program, as an entry-level recruitment tools. These programs are developmental in nature and provide a mechanism for agencies to hire talented students.

4) **Network.** Many federal opportunities are publicized via college alumni/ae organizations, professional associations, and similar groups. There's also a wide range of professional organizations geared to federal employees, including Blacks in Government, Federally Employed Women, and Young Government Leaders.

5) **Consider lesser-known agencies.**

These days, because of popular culture and the media, some federal agencies are more well-known than others. Keep in mind, though, that there are many agencies that can offer parallel experiences.

6) **Intern/volunteer.** You can visit www.studentjobs.gov to learn about student hiring programs. Or, consider volunteering in your community, particularly in a field of interest.

What can Campus Career Counselor readers do to educate their students/grads about federal jobs/careers?

For starters, refer students/grads to the USAJobs.gov web site as well as the other resources I've described here.

As importantly, remind students/grads that the federal government is organizationally complex, and that there are more than 40,000 job postings every day. Students/grads need to do their research and be open to new possibilities.

Finally, remember that there are many factors impacting the federal hiring process, including budgets, security clearances, and more. So encourage students/grads to be patient and persistent as they pursue opportunities.



Kim Ainsworth was appointed Executive Director of the Greater Boston Federal Executive Board in 1998.

She began her federal career as a Presidential Management Intern (PMI) with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 1996. She is now an employee of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Chief Human Capital Officers Office.

During her two-year PMI appointment, Kim did extensive work with Vice President Al Gore's National Partnership for Reinventing Government. After completing the program—which coupled a series of developmental assignments with intensive coursework—she assumed her current position, where she is responsible for implementation, planning, and program management for the Federal Executive Board's two lines of business.

Kim received a bachelor's degree in communications from the University of Massachusetts in 1991 and a master's degree in human resources development from Northeastern University (MA) in 1996.

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