



GUIDE TO MANAGING THE PMF APPLICATION PROCESS

ROBERTSON
FOUNDATION
FOR GOVERNMENT



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION - - - - -	2
ENDORSEMENTS - - - - -	3
SECTION 1: THE PROGRAM - - - - -	6
SECTION 2: WHY BE A PMF? - - - - -	10
SECTION 3: THE APPLICATION - - - - -	14
SECTION 4: THE ONLINE ASSESSMENT - - - - -	18
SECTION 5: THE IN-PERSON ASSESSMENT - - - - -	22
SECTION 6: THE VIRTUAL JOB FAIR - - - - -	26
SECTION 7: THE JOB - - - - -	32
SUMMARY - - - - -	35
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES - - - - -	36
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS - - - - -	37

INTRODUCTION

You are about to embark on an extraordinary journey if you are contemplating the submission of an application to the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program.

Before we get into the guide content, we want to thank the Robertson Foundation for Government, a non-profit family foundation dedicated to helping government meet its talent needs by identifying, educating, and motivating top U.S. graduate students to pursue federal government careers. The Robertson Foundation commissioned this Presidential Management Fellows Application Guide, seeking the technical assistance of GovLoop as the leading knowledge network for public sector professionals. Below is a bit more background on the Robertson Foundation.

Established by the family of the late philanthropists Charles and Marie Robertson, and named in their honor, the Robertson Foundation for Government pursues a mission that was central to Mr. and Mrs. Robertson's philanthropic activities: strengthening the United States government and increasing its ability and determination to defend and extend freedom throughout the world by improving the training and education of men and women for government service. The PMF Program is one such elite entryway into government service that the Robertson Foundation is pleased to support. Helping qualified and deserving recent graduates become PMFs is important to the Robertson Foundation, and one of many ways they are living out their stated mission to improve the United States government.

Through this guide, a vast wealth of information from various sources is brought together into one easy-to-use resource. It taps into an unprecedented collection of more than 60 PMF Program alumni, 10

university career advisors, and 10 government agency PMF program coordinators who contributed their definitive knowledge on how to successfully navigate the application process. A great deal of credit for this guide goes to these talented professionals. We hope that their valuable understanding of the PMF selection process will help you make the most of your own application, and will give you the best shot at reaching your goal of becoming a Presidential Management Fellow.

We also provide a place for you to learn more, watch videos, read blog updates and interact with others involved in the process at PathtoPMF.com.

Please note that this is not an official resource endorsed by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) or the Executive Office of the President (EOP), but represents a trusted source of valuable information about the PMF program. While we will strive to post changes as soon as we see them, please regularly check <http://www.pmf.gov> for official information and updates.

The Robertson Foundation for Government is grateful to the contributions of GovLoop for their role in helping to prepare this guide. Together we are proud to provide this comprehensive resource to the next generation of government leaders.



**APPLICANTS, START YOUR PUBLIC
SERVICE ENGINES...AND GOOD LUCK!**

ENDORSEMENTS



ANDREW CARD

Former Dean of the Bush School of Government and Public Service, Texas A&M University

Former White House Chief of Staff under President George W. Bush

“As the PMF application process undergoes revisions and as the standards for acceptance evolve, it’s our job to make sure that applicants are equipped with the best, most current information about the process. PathtoPMF.com, the product of an unprecedented partnership between the Robertson Foundation for Government and GovLoop, breaks down the barriers that deterred applicants from pursuing one of the most prestigious fellowships our government has to offer. It will be an invaluable resource to every future applicant.”



PAUL LIGHT

Paulette Goddard Professor of Public Service

Founding Principal Investigator of the Global Center for Public Service, New York University

“The PMF is the premier federal program for recruiting the nation’s most talented students into the public service. It has undergone substantial revision in recent years and students often struggle understanding the process. That’s why I’m excited about PathtoPMF.com. The Robertson Foundation for Government has teamed up with the social networking site GovLoop to create PathtoPMF.com as the “go-to” guide, helping prospective applicants navigate the PMF process from application to placement. PathtoPMF.com and the accompanying guide give the PMF program the boost it needs to reignite student interest. If the federal government is to meet the many future challenges it faces, it must have the very best leaders. The PMF Program is the gateway. PathtoPMF.com is your tour guide through the gateway and beyond.”



JAMES STEINBERG

Dean of the Maxwell School of Syracuse University, and University Professor of Social Science, International Affairs, and Law

“The Guide to Managing the Application Process is an invaluable tool for any student interested in the PMF program, one of the most exciting paths to a career in public service. Draw on the experience and insights of those who know the program best – from former PMFs, college career advisors and government managers, the Guide helps prospective applicants understand what it takes to become a PMF. With this guide, the Robertson Foundation has made an extraordinary contribution by helping to attract the brightest and most committed young men and women to service to the nation.”



PETER COWHEY

Dean of the School of Global Policy and Strategy, University of California, San Diego

Qualcomm Endowed Chair in Communications and Technology Policy

“The Presidential Management Fellowship program enjoys considerable prestige within the government and constitutes a solid point of entry for those dedicated to pursuing careers in federal public service. For some agencies, like the State Department, the PMF program is the only viable avenue into entry-level civil service positions. Additionally, PMF hires do well in the US government after the PMF ends because of the program’s rotational opportunities, 80 hours of optional training, and significant fast-tracking opportunities up the GS scale that are largely unavailable to other new hires. I hope that this GovLoop publication, sponsored by the Robertson Foundation for Government, will generate the enthusiastic participation that this program fully warrants.”

“Applying for a Presidential Management Fellowship is not easy, nor should it be. In order to identify the most worthy candidates, applicants are subject to a rigorous review and interview process. We fully support setting high standards for entry into the PMF program, but we also recognize that applicants making a commitment to serve their nation deserve the support from their institutions and organizations like the Robertson Foundation for Government.

PathtoPMF.com, a roadmap to the PMF application process, represents our commitment to the men and women who want to pursue fulfilling careers in service to their nation.”

“The Robertson Foundation’s PathtoPMF.com is an invaluable guide to the often-complex twists and turns of the Presidential Management Fellowship process. For a generation, the PMF program has been a stellar opportunity for the very best and brightest to launch their careers in government leadership. Now, as the Robertson Foundation is providing a powerful new program to help prepare leaders in government service and international affairs, this how-to manual will help countless students find their path to exciting public service careers. We at the University of Maryland School of Public Policy are proud to have shared tips and hints with the Robertson Foundation in improving access to this great program.”

“Last year, four of our Bush School of Government and Public Service graduates were selected as finalists for the Presidential Management Fellowship. I know they all saw the PathtoPMF guide as a valuable resource, especially the section on creating a robust application. The guide prepared our students to have their supporting documentation ready, provided insights to help them update their resumes most effectively and gave a complete picture of the application process timeframe.”

“The PMF program is one of the most competitive in the country. Without the PMF Guide, being selected as a finalist would be incredibly difficult. As a former Navy Admiral, I like to have all the necessary information in front of me. The PathtoPMF guide is a robust and informative guide to the Presidential Management Program. I know it has had a big impact on our students here at the Fletcher School. The additional resources section alone is worth the download because it provides all the necessary information in one place.”

“2015 was a great year for University of Maryland students. A record number of our graduates applied and were accepted to the Presidential Management Fellowship. I know the PathtoPMF guide played a large role in their success. The Partnership between the Robertson Foundation and GovLoop was a key driver to the success of our students because it gave them a tool to help clear the path for the application process.”

STEPHEN BOSWORTH

Retired Dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University

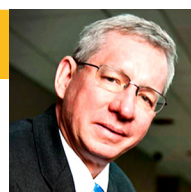
Former U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy

Former U.S. Ambassador to South Korea, the Philippines, and Tunisia



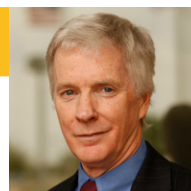
DONALD KETTLE

Dean of the School of Public Policy, University of Maryland, College Park



RYAN C. CROCKER

Dean and Executive Professor, Bush School of Government and Public Service



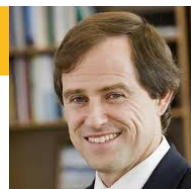
JAMES STAVRIDIS

Navy Admiral and dean of The Fletcher School at Tufts University



ROBERT ORR

Dean and Professor, School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland

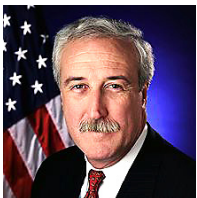


SECTION 1

THE PROGRAM

HISTORY

The Presidential Management Fellows Program (PMF) is one of several ways for current and recent students of advanced graduate degree programs to start on a career path as a public servant in the federal government. The program, originally known as the Presidential Management Interns Program, was established by President Carter's Executive Order in 1977 to attract young people with exceptional management potential into government careers. Several talented people got their start in the early years of the program, including former NASA head Sean O'Keefe and the 13th Commissioner of Social Security Kenneth Apfel.



In 1982, the program mission statement was broadened under President Reagan to attract "outstanding men and women from a variety of academic disciplines who have a clear interest in, and commitment to, a career in the analysis and management of public policies and programs." Senator Jeff Merkley of Oregon began his fellowship the same year as this executive order.



In 2003, under the direction of President George W. Bush, the program was renamed the Presidential Management Fellows Program, to more accurately reflect the talent and professionalism of those men and women serving in the program. In 2010, the PMF became part of the Pathways Program, a hiring reform initiative designed to recruit new talent to the public sector.

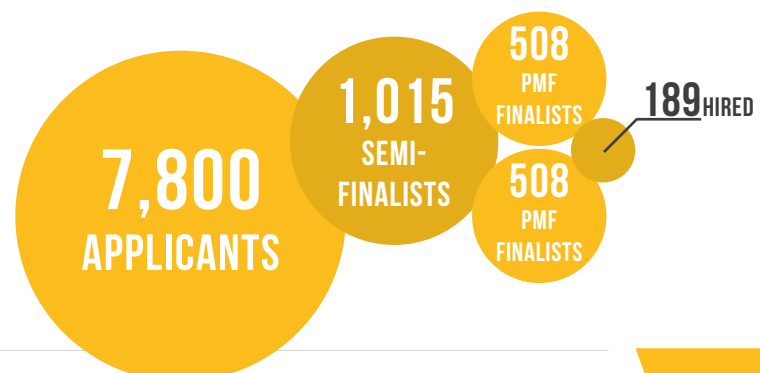
OVERVIEW

The hiring process for the United States federal government adheres to many rules and regulations that attempt to determine a candidate's quality. The PMF program allows recent graduates to compete for jobs against other people of their relative age and experience. It also provides management training, rotations through different agencies, and competitive entry-level salaries.

While the PMF program is an excellent opportunity to start a career in public service and sets someone up for quick advancement, the application process is also extremely competitive. Even if you are one of the approximately 600 Finalists named out of roughly 7,800 applicants, you are not guaranteed a job placement.

With this in mind, it is smart for even the most qualified applicant to apply for other opportunities as well. Luckily, the PMF is not the only entry point into

FOR THE PMF CLASS OF 2014, THERE WERE:



the federal government. It would be wise to apply to the Recent Graduates Pathways program, and other positions as they are posted on USAJOBS, especially GS-7, GS-9, and GS-11 jobs.

The PMF program is a two-year commitment, during which participants are paid a full salary and benefits at the GS-9, GS-11, or GS-12 levels. Fellows can be promoted up to the GS-13 level during the two years of the program.

This guide will walk you through the rigorous application process and help you earn a highly sought after spot as a Fellow.

In order to fulfill the requirements of a PMF, all hired participants must complete the following:

- ▶ Attend a minimum of 160 hours of formal classroom training (80 hours per year)
- ▶ Complete at least one development assignment four to six months in length
- ▶ Create a performance plan and undergo an annual performance review
- ▶ Pass the annual review
- ▶ Create an Individual Development Plan (IDP), used to set goals for time in the program
- ▶ Engage in optional rotational opportunities with other offices or agencies
- ▶ Be assigned and work with a senior-level mentor

- ▶ Receive Executive Resource Board (ERB or equivalent) certification that an individual has met all program requirements

PROCESS AND ELIGIBILITY

New program regulations that went into effect on July 10, 2012, under the Pathways Program strive to make it easier for students and recent graduates to find job opportunities and get experience working in the federal government. The PMF Program falls under the Pathways banner and allows graduates to apply to the program in their final year of study (Graduation by August 31st), as well as for two years following the completion of their studies.

PMFs come from a variety of disciplines and graduate studies, such as master's students, PhD recipients, and law students. In addition, the program invites applicants from a wide array of backgrounds,

"IT'S IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER TO LOOK AT THE NUMBER OF APPLICANTS VERSUS FINALISTS. IT'S A PRETTY SELECTIVE PROGRAM - NOT ONE YOU CAN DEPEND ON GETTING. YOU APPLY WITH THE HOPES OF GETTING IT, BUT YOU NEED TO KEEP ON APPLYING TO OTHER POSITIONS THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS."

Kaleigh Emerson, PMF Class of 2010, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services



EMPHASIZING SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATH (STEM)

Currently, the U.S. government has a skills deficit in the fields of science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine. Known as STEM, these fields represent an area in which the federal government is attempting to increase its number of employees. In support of this effort, the PMF application includes a STEM track option for applicants.

To qualify for this career track, applicants will need to do the following:

- ▶ Have completed an advanced degree from an accredited university in a STEM discipline or no more than two years prior to the opening date of the PMF application
- ▶ Select the STEM career track option when initiating the online assessment

APPLICATION TIMELINE

SEPT 28 - OCT 13

Submit an online application on USAJOBS. Upload resume, transcript, and supporting documentation for Veteran's and Indian preference. Complete the online assessment and 3 additional essays.

DEC - FEB

If you pass the online assessment, as a Semi-Finalist you will be invited to the in-person assessment in Washington, DC. The assessment is a half-day evaluation that includes an individual behavioral interview, a group exercise, and a proctored written test.

EARLY SPRING

If you pass the in-person assessment and are selected as a Finalist, you will be invited to participate in the Virtual Job Fair, accessible through the PMF website. Finalists have one year to obtain an appointment as a PMF.

including individuals with advanced degrees in the humanities, sciences, information technology and whatever else you've chosen as your course of study. Many graduates with non-traditional backgrounds have harnessed the PMF program to jumpstart very successful careers of service. Much depends on current needs within the federal government from one year to the next. Understanding current events will help give you a sense of staffing trends.

Changes to future program eligibility will be made available on the official PMF Program website (<http://www.pmf.gov>).

SCHEDULE

Traditionally, the PMF program begins to accept applications every fall. Prospective participants are notified that applications are being accepted through an announcement from USAJOBS. Head on over to USAJOBS, set up your account, and get familiar with the system if you have not already done so. It is critical that you are familiar with the system before you begin your application to become a PMF.

Once you have completed the application, you will be prompted to complete an online assessment. Based on your score from the online assessment, you will be named a Semi-Finalist and be invited to an in-person assessment. If your score is high enough in the in-person assessment, you will be named a Finalist and be eligible for a PMF appointment. At that point, you will attend a virtual job fair to meet potential agencies, and a mutual selection process (hopefully) leads you to a two-year rotational assignment.

WORKING WITH YOUR COLLEGE / UNIVERSITY ADVISOR

Your college and university advisors may be the best resources available to you throughout the application process (in addition to this guide, of course!). Many university career advisors host an informational session at the beginning of each year to let students know about the PMF program and help them decide if the program is right for them. Others send out emails and direct students to materials on the Internet. Find out who the career advisor for the PMF program is at your school and ask them for help in laying out a plan for your application. We'll say it again: they will be one of most valuable resources for you on the path to PMF.

"BY THE START OF MY FINAL YEAR IN GRADUATE SCHOOL, I DECIDED ON PURSUING A CAREER IN PUBLIC SERVICE AND I ESTABLISHED MY OWN NETWORK OF PMF ALUMNI AND OTHER CONTACTS IN FEDERAL AGENCIES. I USED MY SCHOOL'S RESOURCES, MY OWN CONNECTIONS, AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS. THESE CONVERSATIONS REALLY HELPED MY PREPARATION."

Steve Chu, PMF Class of 2011, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services



SECTION 2

WHY BE A PMF?

According to the PMF alumni that we interviewed for this guide, the PMF program is the best way to start a public service career as it:

- ▶ Provides exposure to several federal agencies through the built-in rotations
- ▶ Creates opportunities for making connections with peers and senior-level mentors
- ▶ Offers dependable pay and benefits with a good balance of work and personal development

PMFs also have the potential to work on projects they would never have access to in the private sector, while still enjoying the leeway to explore and find a niche in the federal government.

Other PMFs emphasize how great it looks on a resume, whether or not you accept the fellowship. You have access to great jobs and training opportunities that are unavailable to most other federal employees.

FROM THE SOURCE: A PREMIER OPPORTUNITY

“It’s a great opportunity to experience working for the federal government, and it can open doors to many exciting opportunities if you’re willing to make the program work for you.”



Christopher Gee, PMF Class of 2005,
Department of Homeland Security



"It's the best possible way to enter government, as far as I'm concerned - you can be hired for jobs that are a bit of a "reach" qualifications-wise, because the screening process makes you automatically qualified. Also, the fact that an agency is willing to pay a fee and commit to training in order to take you on means that they're somewhat invested in your development as an employee and a person, more so than in the general hiring process."



Kathryn Neeper, PMF Class of 2008,
Broadcasting Board of Governors

"It is a great way to gain a broad understanding of management in the federal sector with opportunities to try out different jobs (through rotations) and with regular advancement opportunities."



Cherie Takemoto, PMF Class of 1982, Health and Human Services

"My favorite part of being a PMF is getting to know the other PMFs. The other PMFs are really, really neat people. You have a wide variety of people and backgrounds, but everyone is ambitious and everyone is interested in getting to know the other PMFs. I went to a couple PMF events that were PMF-specific. They were just really fun because you have something in common, but are having different experiences. That was really nice. Also, the promotions are really good and you are early in your career

and getting promotions. The training opportunities are great. If you are in DC, you are given diverse training opportunities..."



Kaleigh Emerson, PMF Class of 2010, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

"Every U.S. student who is remotely thinking about a career in the federal government should apply for the PMF. The opportunity to have employment doors opened for you because you are a finalist, makes starting your government career, so much easier than going through USAJOBS."



Stephanie Boomhower, Assistant Director of Career Services, School of Global Policy and Strategy, University of California, San Diego

"Just the prestige of being a PMF Finalist gives you that leg up. I think folks who are familiar with the program -- and understand what they had to go through to become a Finalist -- understand that this is the cream of the crop."



Lisa Allison-Lee, Veterans Affairs, Agency Coordinator

"IT IS A FABULOUS WAY TO COME INTO THE GOVERNMENT. SINCE COMING INTO THE GOVERNMENT IN 1982 I HAVE BEEN IN THE GOVERNMENT THE WHOLE TIME. I HAVE HIRED PROBABLY 30 PMFS AND I HAD MORE IN DIFFERENT ROTATIONS, AND I HAVE NEVER HAD A BAD EXPERIENCE. THE PROGRAM HAS THE REPUTATION NOW THAT YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO GET A BAD PERSON. I HAVE THREE PMFS ON MY STAFF NOW -- PROBABLY MORE IF I COUNT FORMER PMFS!"

Bev Goodwin, PMF Class of 1982,
General Services Administration



"THE PRESIDENTIAL MANAGEMENT FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM ENJOYS CONSIDERABLE PRESTIGE WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT AND CONSTITUTES A SOLID POINT OF ENTRY FOR THOSE DEDICATED TO PURSUING CAREERS IN FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE. FOR SOME AGENCIES, THE PMF PROGRAM IS THE ONLY VIABLE AVENUE INTO ENTRY LEVEL CIVIL SERVICE POSITIONS. ADDITIONALLY, PMF HIRES DO WELL IN THE US GOVERNMENT AFTER THE PMF ENDS BECAUSE OF THE PROGRAM'S ROTATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, 80 HOURS OF OPTIONAL TRAINING, AND SIGNIFICANT FAST-TRACKING OPPORTUNITIES UP THE GS SCALE THAT ARE LARGELY UNAVAILABLE TO OTHER NEW HIRES."

Peter Cowhey, Dean, School of Global Policy and
Strategy, University of California, San Diego



HISTORICALLY FEDERAL SERVICE RETENTION RATE FOR PMFS:

83-88% AFTER
THREE YEARS

63-77% AFTER
FIVE YEARS



1 IN 12 PMFs/PMIs between 1982 and 1989
joined the senior executive service

SECTION 3

THE APPLICATION



PRO TIP:

As an applicant, you are evaluated on the following core competencies during the online and in-person assessments: **adaptability, personal accountability, public service motivation, problem solving, interpersonal skills, oral communication, and written communication.** The application is formal so don't use texting slang. Try to keep these competencies in mind throughout the process.

HARNESS THE PROGRAM. BE ASSERTIVE. BE CREATIVE.

When it comes to the application process, the experts said more than anything else: “Be assertive, be creative, and make the program your own. No one has more control over their career success within the PMF program than you do.”

Your perfect PMF experience begins with the application. Since this step marks the first phase of the process, you might be tempted to complete it quickly at the eleventh hour on the due date. The message we received from career advisors was this: do not take anything for granted during the application process! It would be a shame for a small error in the application to prevent you from moving forward. We

want you to excel and receive an appointment, so follow these steps to be sure you are on track with your application.

“It’s important to make sure that every step of the application is done accurately. I have several friends who would have been well-qualified, but they were not considered due to computer malfunction when submitting their initial application. If you were applying to the typical job you might be able to call and say ‘I tried to submit my resume by email, and didn’t get a response, did you receive it?’ you can’t do those types of things when you’re applying for PMF. You need to be a lot more detail-oriented in this application than you do in others.”



Kaleigh Emerson, PMF Class of 2010, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

TOP 5 TIPS FOR COMPLETING YOUR APPLICATION:

START EARLY. Make sure that you have given yourself enough time to complete your online application. Past applicants have reported having trouble with the online submission system, such as not being able to save attachments - problems that can be easily taken care of by starting well in advance of the deadline.

HAVE YOUR SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION READY. You will need a copy of your transcript(s). These copies can be unofficial or official. You will also need any and all documentation related to Veteran's preference, Indian preference, and accommodations for those with disabilities.

UPDATE YOUR RESUME. For those who will be applying to work in the federal government for the first time, make sure that you know the specific details about how to correctly create a federal resume: [[GovLoop Rock Your Resume Guide](#)]. This will be an essential step to make sure that federal hiring agents understand your skillset and background. "A lot of PMFs and people in general didn't realize that structuring your resume is a lot different from private industry," said Lisa Allison-Lee, Veterans Affairs, Agency Coordinator.

UNDERSTAND THE PMF PROGRAM. Know what your commitment will be when you are hired as a PMF fellow, and why you are motivated to apply. This is a good opportunity to start thinking about your "elevator pitch" -- quick talking points about yourself that will come in handy in later stages of the application as well.

HAVE SOMEONE REVIEW YOUR APPLICATION. This will cut down on small needless errors. Your career advisors would be good candidates for asking for help.

PMF RESUME CHEAT SHEET

BASIC FACTS:

- ▶ Your resume can be in any format or style, but the file size cannot exceed 3 MB. There also is no length requirement, but we recommend that you take as many pages as you need to explain how your background and experience maps to the job requirements.
- ▶ You have the option of faxing in your resume, uploading it (as a Word doc or PDF), or creating and submitting one through the USAJOBS' resume builder.
- ▶ Make sure to provide your full name and contact information.
- ▶ It's a good idea to tailor your resume to the [7 core PMF competencies](#). If named a Finalist, you will have the opportunity to modify your resume for specific job positions.
- ▶ We suggest that you format your resume with similar headings and sections as those on USAJOBS since most agencies are already familiar with this layout. We also recommend that you make the information in your resume as easy to read as possible: include bullets and structure each section in an outline format.
- ▶ When you're done, double-check your resume for grammar, punctuation, spacing, and overall format. It's also a good idea to have others, such as your career advisor, check your resume for content.

Key sections to include in your resume and tips for each section are included below:



resume

EXPERIENCE

- ▶ List in chronological order, beginning with the most recent.
- ▶ Provide the name and contact information of your supervisor.
- ▶ Remember that you don't have to list everything. Focus on the experiences that are most relevant and portray who you are as a candidate and professional.
- ▶ Focus on content: try using the CAR (context, action, result) strategy when discussing your accomplishments. Also highlight any knowledge, skills, or abilities that you gained through the experience.
- ▶ Include quantity references when possible (i.e. managed a \$X million project, taught X students, etc.)
- ▶ Make yourself stand out overall by showing how you saved time or money, met deadlines, worked efficiently to achieve results, or served as an effective member of a team.

EDUCATION

- ▶ List in chronological order, beginning with the most recent.
- ▶ Include any honors, relevant coursework, licenses, and certifications.
- ▶ List scholarships and fellowships, describing each briefly to give hiring managers a sense of the purpose and significance of the award.

ADDITIONAL CONTENT

- ▶ List affiliations, volunteer work experience, and professional publications.
- ▶ Include any awards, leadership activities, public speaking engagements, skills, and languages that you have not already discussed in previous sections.

- ▶ State whether or not you are a U.S. citizen or authorized to work in the U.S. If you have dual citizenship, mention both.
- ▶ Include information regarding selective service enrollment and Veteran's and Indian preference.
- ▶ List out any and all security clearances, including their level and current status.

REFERENCES

- ▶ Include 2-3 references. They can be from personal, professional, or academic contacts.
- ▶ For each reference, include their title, contact information (phone and email), and the type of reference (i.e. personal, professional, academic).
- ▶ These references do not have to be different from those listed as supervisors in the Experience section. If an agency needs more references, they will ask you.

RESOURCES

For more information about maximizing your resume for the federal government and the PMF Program, please review the following resources:

- ▶ Webinar: "Resume Tips for Prospective PMFs"
<http://www.govloop.com/profiles/blogs/resume-tips-for-prospective-presidential-management-fellows-pmfs>
- ▶ Webinar: Q&A from "Resume Tips for Prospective PMFs"
<http://www.govloop.com/profiles/blogs/q-a-responses-from-resumes-tips-for-prospective-pmfs-google-hango>
- ▶ GovLoop's "Rock Your Resume" Group
<http://www.govloop.com/group/rockyourresume>
- ▶ Government Resume Makeover Examples:
<http://www.govloop.com/profiles/blog/list?tag=Government+Resume+Makeover>

SECTION 4

THE ONLINE ASSESSMENT

As you sit down to complete the online assessment, take a moment and make sure that you have the proper system and browser requirements. This is especially important for Mac users, who should complete the assessment using Internet Explorer. For additional details regarding system and browser requirements please refer to OPM's official guide at http://pmf.gov/media/93710/2016_pmf_assess_prep_guide_09-03-15.pdf.

To begin, applicants should select a career track, Traditional or STEM, and their qualifying discipline for that track. It is important to remember that you will only be able to choose ONE track.



PRO TIP:

The third written response will be different for STEM applicants and will focus on an applicant's technical knowledge and skill in their STEM discipline.

The PMF online assessment has three sections:

1. A video-based situational judgment assessment;
2. A questionnaire designed to assess specific work styles and work-related characteristics required for success and fit in the PMF Program, and
3. Essay questions that are collected during the application process, but factored into the In-Person Assessment.



Each section is untimed and you are free to take breaks in between sections. You do not have to complete the assessment in one sitting, *except for the essay portion, which has to be completed all at once.* However, you can make edits up until the closing announcement. As a result, we'd recommend that you read everything carefully. We live in a fast-paced world where we're conditioned to breeze through information. Resist the temptation to skip over the instructions quickly and think you've got it. Take your time and understand what's being asked of you. Since the application and assessment are untimed, there's no need to rush.

While it is untimed, OPM tells you that it takes 1 - 2 hours to complete the entire application. Take that time seriously. OPM also suggests that you do it all in one sitting. We'd second that notion as well. Block out 2-3 hours in a quiet place without interruptions so that you can focus. You'll be glad you did it that way as you'll end up with a stronger application.

In terms of your essays, a good idea is to copy and paste them from a word processing software into the online assessment. This is smart for two reasons:

1. The essays have a minimum (2,000) and maximum (3,000) length allotted. This number includes spacing and punctuation. Track your progress using your word processing software.
2. Save your essays! You will need a copy of your essays if you move on to the Semi-Finalist round because they will be used for interview questions during the in-person assessment.



PRO TIP:

If you need technical assistance during the online assessment, follow the HELP instructions provided during the application process. Do not contact the main PMF office.

Please also be sure to read the official PMF Assessment Preparation Guide as it provides 99% of the details you need to know:

http://www.pmf.gov/media/89988/2015_pmf_assess_prep_guide_09-18-14.pdf

Speaking of saving, the module had no place where a person could hit "Save." A nervous applicant might be worried that they could exit the module and lose their answers. What we found, however, was that every time you log off and log back in (which we did deliberately a few times to test this theory), it saved our work.

When you're done, you're done. Once you complete the video portion of the assessment and hit submit, you cannot access it again. Before hitting submit, you can start and stop, and your responses will be saved. You can also navigate forward and backward when you are in the video and questionnaire portions, BUT when you are finished responding to all of the questions and hit submit in a section, that's it. No do overs.

While each of the above sections seems straightforward, the online assessment is most likely different from any other test you have taken. Some PMFs we surveyed about their experience were confused at the nature of the questions.

"I didn't do any formal preparation for the online assessment. I was told by people who had experience with it that you shouldn't try to overthink it - they said your best bet was just to answer honestly and go with your gut. All I did was make sure I set aside enough time and did it in a place I felt comfortable and could concentrate."



Pat Hodgens, PMF Class of 2013, Department of Labor

"Many of the questions were repeated in slightly different ways to see if you would answer consistently. It felt like I was getting everything 'wrong' but realistically there was probably no wrong answer. Many had an obvious answer as well: if you are able to work well with others and perform well on the job. I know some of my fellow applicants at my university did not take the assessment very seriously and then were surprised they did not make it through the process. I really applied myself and was successful at being selected."



Elizabeth Fischer, PMF Class of 2011, Health and Human Services

"The only thing you know for sure is that they are looking for leadership qualities. Just be honest. One of our online assessments was personality leadership. I'm not sure what it tested. We answered a lot of strange questions that you couldn't prepare for - they weren't knowledge-based so you just have to trust that you are a good candidate and answer those questions honestly."



Ashley Cassels, PMF Class of 2010, Small Business Administration

A lot of the questions are trying to determine the potential PMF candidate's personality. While there are no right or wrong answers, the PMF program usually tries to look for well-balanced, sociable, intelligent, flexible people with a strong work ethic and an enthusiasm for getting the job done, and being creative to do so if necessary.

Overall, the most solid advice we can give you for the online assessment is: be yourself, don't overthink questions, and make an effort to move efficiently to get through all the questions. OPM suggests applicants don't "Fake Good," or try to game the test with their answers.

"I did not do a whole lot of prep for [the online assessment]. We did receive a little practice guide that had a couple questions. I went through that multiple times. A former PMF suggested going through the LSAT practice book, so I did read through that. It was helpful to get me in that logical frame of mind. [My advice is to] just go sit in a library for an afternoon and read through the LSAT practice book to get the gist of how you're supposed to be thinking on the logic portion of the assessment."



Kaleigh Emerson, PMF Class of 2010, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

"What the PMF is looking for is collaborative team-builders. What they are not looking for are alpha personalities. I have seen some outstanding candidates who I knew were strong personalities get knocked out in the first round. I probably know about forty or forty-five PMFs, and with one exception, every single one of them is not an alpha personality."

There is one person who seems to have slipped through the cracks, but the others are not. They are thoughtful, self-effacing people, total team players, fiercely committed to public service, patriots, and that is really what you need to be to be a PMF. You can't make yourself into a personality that you're not and if you think you're a strong alpha personality, take the test and see what happens."



Career Advisor

SECTION 5

IN-PERSON ASSESSMENT

If you pass the online assessment, as a Semi-Finalist, you will be invited to the in-person assessment. The assessment has a few different elements, including group, individual, and writing sections. The in-person assessment will take place in Washington, DC, at a date and location yet to be determined.

Semi-finalists will be invited to register for the assessment via email. You must schedule your in-person assessment and registration is on a first come, first serve basis.

Below is the typical format of the day. Each section will be timed and proctored, and the assessment overall should take about 5 hours. Each part of the assessment will be structured around issues that are critical to the Federal Government today:

- ▶ a **Group Exercise** that simulates a day in the life of a PMF
- ▶ a **Behavioral Interview** that allows you to demonstrate the core competencies of a PMF
- ▶ a **Written Exercise** that will be collected via a laptop provided at the in-person assessment and scored the same day by the assessors.

The key for the in-person assessment is to stay calm and collected during the interviews. The panel of interviewers will be composed of two or three federal agency representatives. Be prepared to answer questions that will demonstrate:

- ▶ Your abilities to solve complex problems
- ▶ Your flexibility in the workplace
- ▶ Your motivations for applying to the PMF program
- ▶ Your interpersonal and oral communication skills

This is your time to shine as a potential PMF candidate. You have already made it this far, and you are getting closer to your PMF appointment. Bev Godwin, PMF Class of 1982, with more than 30 years of public sector leadership, recommended:



“When you go to the group interview, you don’t want to try to outshine everyone else and put people down to shine. You want to show how you collaborate with people...even if someone says something really stupid, which they might in the interview, even saying something like ‘well, that’s an interesting point, have you looked at it from this view?’ [is a good approach]. So you’re diplomatic, collaborative and building off what other people say...”



PRO TIP:

Washington, DC, will be the sole location for the in-person assessment. Book your accommodations early.

IN-PERSON ASSESSMENT ADVICE FROM PMFS AND CAREER ADVISORS

Here are a few other nuggets of wisdom from people who've preceded you:

"I worked on the interview preparation tool STAR: where you structure your responses to behavioral questions around the Situation, Task, Action, and Result. Ensuring all my answers had a linear arc improved the quality of my in-person performance. Practice your ability to work in groups and to answer behavioral questions without rambling."



Jeffrey Bartelli, PMF Finalist, Class of 2013

"Know the seven core competencies that assessors are evaluating. For each one, prepare one or two brief examples of a situation in which you demonstrated that quality. You should be able to draw on these examples in the behavioral interview. Thinking ahead ensures that you can choose the best examples and integrate them smoothly into your answers."



Jenny Russell, 2015 PMF Finalist, Department of State

"Be a team player during the group presentation-that part is about how you handle and resolve team issues more than it is about your speech topic."



Jeni Webb, PMF Class of 2011, Department of Housing and Urban Development

"Don't try to compete with those around you. Treat it as you would the work environment and act accordingly. If you have a group assessment engage as you would if these were your colleagues."



Career Advisor

"Make friends with your cohort of competitors that are taking the assessment with you -- everyone is highly qualified -- no need to be mean about it. Don't feel bad if the assessors don't look up or appear to be curt. They are scribbling furiously to take down their impressions, but I think they have received special instructions on how they are and are/not supposed to interact with the interviewees."

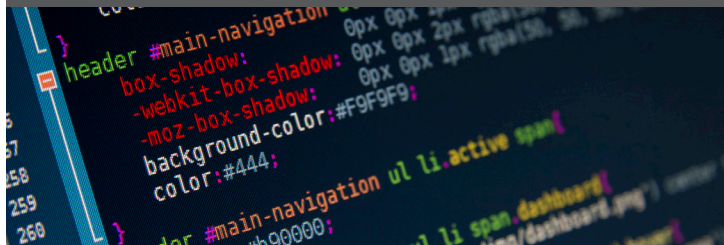


PMF Finalist, Class of 2011



PRO TIP:

Note that STEM semi-finalists will be evaluated separately during the in-person assessment. The examination format will be the same, but STEM candidates will also have to answer technical questions during their interviews and will be evaluated by assessors with a background in the STEM disciplines.



"Do not be swayed by the other applicants. Everyone has their own idea of how the process works, what they are looking for, or what they have heard through the grapevine."



PMF Finalist, Class of 2011

"Be well groomed and clean and neat. Prepare by reading op-eds in major newspapers on a variety of topics. Remember to make eye contact, engage others, answer clearly and articulately and be on point. Demonstrate that you are a leader but also a team player."



Bridget Shea Westfall, PMF Class of 2005

"Review your essays you wrote as part of the application, these are the basis of your in-person interview. Some interviewers were friendly, some were stone-faced. You need to be ready to perform at your best even if you're not being given the normal body language or facial cues that might otherwise provide you with positive reinforcement."



Stephanie Boomhower, Assistant Director of Career Services, School of Global Policy and Strategy, University of California, San Diego

"All I can say is that it is very, very easy. No preparation needed, other than your graduate school experience. No personal information will be used, other than your applicant ID. Do not bring anything like a mobile phone; there is no locker. There is a common area where you can put your hat, coat, umbrella. You can put your phone there, if you like. That's all I can say. All the best. May all get selected."



PathtoPMF.com Discussion Participant

CONGRATULATIONS: YOU'VE BEEN NAMED A FINALIST!

If you pass the in-person assessment and are selected as a Finalist, you will be invited to participate in the Job Fair. Notification of your Finalist status is typically sent via email in the spring. Below is a bit more statistical information about the types of people who were selected as Finalists for the 2015 PMF class.

One quick note before you peruse the tables below: even if you see that your school, your degree or your target agency is under-represented in the data below...

DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED. APPLY ANYWAY AND GIVE IT YOUR ALL!

The PMF application process is designed to reward merit, so you have just as solid a chance of success as anyone else.

Once you have been named a Finalist, you now have to get hired into a PMF position, pass a background investigation, and go through the agency's on-boarding process. For instance, it can take several months to pass a federal background investigation for a security clearance.

Agency PMF Program Coordinators strongly suggested that candidates view the Project Positions System (PPS) for available positions for PMF Finalists. The PPS is a way for agencies to advertise available PMF appointments and is only for current PMF Finalist. Check frequently as new positions are posted and change often throughout the year.

WHAT DID THE 2015 FINALISTS STUDY? TOP 5 DEGREES

International Disciplines:	78
Law (JD or other law degree):	72
Public Administration:	58
Policy Analysis:	46
Public Health (STEM eligible):	26

WHICH SCHOOLS PLACED THE MOST FINALISTS? IN 2015

American University:	43
Georgetown University:	32
George Washington University:	22
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor:	18
Johns Hopkins University, School of Adv. Int'l Studies:	17
Columbia University:	17
University of Maryland:	12
Harvard University, Kennedy School:	12
Yale University:	11
London School of Economics	10
George Mason University:	9
Emory University:	8
New York University:	8
Syracuse University	9

AGENCIES WHERE 2015 PMF FINALISTS HAVE FOUND PLACEMENT, SO FAR THIS YEAR:

Department of Health and Human Services:	36
Office of Management and Budget:	25
Department of State:	13
Department of Labor:	13
Department of Agriculture:	11
Department of Housing and Urban Dev.:	11
Department of Homeland Security:	10
Department of Veterans Affairs:	9
USAID:	9
Department of Defense:	8
Department of Interior:	8
Small Business Administration:	8
Department of Commerce:	7
Department of Transportation:	6
Department of Treasury:	5
Social Security Administration:	4
Department of Education:	3
Environmental Protection Agency:	2
Department of Energy:	2

SECTION 6

THE VIRTUAL JOB FAIR



PRO TIP:

STEM finalists should target STEM-focused agencies and positions at the virtual job fair. These positions have been set aside only for STEM PMF finalists.

The PMF Job Fair is where Finalists begin the process of finding their appointment. Typically, the Job Fair has been held in Washington, DC as a traditional, in-person event. However, this event became a Virtual Job Fair, occurring online in Spring 2015. You can use the fair to learn more about agencies to inform your decision-making process and meet agency representatives that participate in the event.

SHOULD YOU ATTEND THE FAIR?

One question some Finalists ask is: how important is it to attend the job fair? Our best insight comes from Bev Godwin, PMF Class of 1982 and now a senior executive at the General Services Administration, who has been involved in hiring PMF Finalists. Godwin said, “We don’t participate in the job fair if we don’t have an opening to fill. If we’re there, we’re looking to hire and we’re looking for the best person, and we’re usually very anxious to fill that position.” In other words, agencies that are serious about hiring will be at the event. If you’re serious about getting hired, you will likely want to be there, too.

BEFORE THE FAIR: DO YOUR HOMEWORK

There are a few important steps you can take before the Job Fair. Below we’ve listed five of them:

I. RESEARCH AGENCIES THAT INTEREST YOU. Let’s face it: government’s big. Your options are immense. You will want to learn as much as you can about prospective agencies in advance so that you can chat knowledgeably with their representative at the fair.

“The applicant should do research up front to know which agencies they are interested in...and then be sure to go and talk to people at that booth, but also to be open to agencies that maybe they haven’t heard of. They likely don’t know every agency. You can go online and look up the government manual to learn about the mission of every government agency...there are some interesting small agencies or offices within agencies that do really cool things. So be open to other things and spend time talking to as many people as you can.”



Bev Godwin, PMF Class of 1982, General Services Administration



PRO TIP:

While many Finalists found their appointments during the job fair in the past, we learned from more than one PMF in the Class of 2015 that their best opportunities came from proactively reaching out to specific, targeted agencies before the Virtual Job Fair.

2. CONSIDER THE SIZE OF THE AGENCY, ITS MISSION, AND THE EXPERIENCE YOU HOPETO GAIN.

At smaller agencies you may have the opportunity to make more immediate impact and receive leadership opportunities, but you may not have as many resources (training, technology, fellow PMFs) available to you. At larger agencies you may have all the resources you need, but you may not get the immediate leadership opportunities.

3. PRIORITIZE YOUR TOP PICKS, BUT REMAIN OPEN-MINDED.

Once you've done your homework on your favorite agencies, it's always a good practice to rank them in the order of where you most want to work - and don't just think about your placement, but where you might want to spend your career.

Steve Morris, PMF Class of 2009 and currently with the Small Business Administration, told us, "I had a short list [of agencies] in my mind...but I did keep an open mind and I ended up at an agency I had never heard of until I walked past the booth at the job fair. I had never heard of it, but I really liked the vibe that they had."

Matthew Upton, a Career Advisor at the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University, emphasized the importance of being open-minded, stating that, "Finalists should be flexible. You may not get the position you wanted, but you can get one that enhances your knowledge, skills, and abilities and helps you network. Be open, therefore, to a position that diversifies who you are, but doesn't change who you are."

4. DON'T WAIT FOR THE FAIR TO MAKE CONTACT.

If you are showing up to the job fair and expecting to engage with the State Department, or one of the other big agencies, you will be too late. Ask your career counselor for contact information for the agency coordinators or past PMFs from your school who have a connection with that agency. Try to schedule your most sought after interviews ahead of time. Check the Projected Position System (PPS) website for PMF positions that may interest you. Email and/or call the designated point of contact (this is not always the PMF Agency Coordinator) for any PMF position for which you wish to interview as spots are limited.

Jeffrey Bartelli, PMF Class of 2013 Finalist, said, "I don't know anybody who got their position through the job fair. All the people I know either reached out to the agency they got hired with or the agency reached out to them."

As a current PMF Coordinator for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and PMF class of 2007, Ginny Hill confirmed this thinking:



"Start inquiring with agencies before the fair. Some agencies do interviews before/during the fair. Some may not be ready for applicants but they can hold on to your resume. If you wait too long, you might miss out on an agency you want. If needed, tailor your resume to the specific job or agency to which you're applying. It's more work, but worth it."

One PMF Finalist in the Class of 2013, Pat Hodgins, learned that this approach really works:



"I reached out to offices who had either posted jobs that I was interested in or were doing work that I was interested in. I also communicated heavily with agencies who had contacted me. By the time the virtual job fair came around, I had already set up in-person interviews for the offices where there was a mutual interest."

For me personally, the virtual job fair was not as useful as these personal interactions with potential employers. I was able to set up one meeting through the fair which did lead to an interview and an offer, but for the most part the informal connections were much more helpful. I would strongly recommend viewing the virtual job fair as a supplement to your search, not the main component. If I had relied solely on the job fair, I wouldn't have the job I have now."

PREPARING FOR A VIRTUAL FAIR: WHAT ACTIONS CAN A PERSON TAKE TO GET READY FOR THE EVENT?

GovLoop hosted its own Virtual Government Career Fair using the same technology platform as the PMF Program. We had thousands of participants that took advantage of opportunities to drop off their resume and interact with agency representatives in virtual booths, attend educational webinars that taught attendees how to get ahead in government, and engage in live chats with government career experts - very similar to the Virtual PMF Job Fair.

GovLoop's Amy DeWolf planned and managed that event as well as dozens of other virtual training events. Based on her bird's-eye view of a virtual career fair, we asked her to share some of her insights for prospective virtual career fair participants.

- ▶ It sounds simple but test your computer. You don't want to waste time logging in when you could be talking to recruiters and gathering information.
- ▶ Look at the schedule in advance and plan your day as you would an in-person conference.
- ▶ Check your social media sites. Given the nature of the Internet, recruiters can quickly search for your LinkedIn and Facebook profiles while talking to you. Privacy settings are your friend.

If you needed any more evidence that this approach is worth your while, Denise Rieberman, a Career Advisor at George Washington University, said that she "talked to one of the three Finalists about prepping for the virtual career fair, but I'm not even sure if she participated. All three of our Finalists landed positions through networking."

5. GET YOUR PROFESSIONAL HOUSE IN ORDER. Ask your Career Services advisor or other trusted person to review your resume (make sure your resume is free of grammatical and typographical errors). Make sure your resume tells a coherent story. Even if you've done a lot of different things, help recruiters find the thread. A couple introductory bullets at the top can make all the difference.

A PMF Finalist from the Class of 2013, affirmed this advice:



"I ensured my resume was updated. I logged in very early to the fair and utilized the private message function to communicate with agency POCs. I later received positive feedback from an employer for using this feature."

You may also want to look over supplemental materials that show your skills (policy memos you've written for school, outreach materials you've prepared for a previous job) and have them ready to demonstrate your experience.

Jeffrey Bartelli, PMF Class of 2013, emphasized this last bullet, suggesting that "PMFs need to have an up-to-date and well-populated LinkedIn profile. My boss found me that way in advance of the job fair."

Moreover, Nikki Boudreaux, PMF Class of 2013 and now working at the Veterans Health Administration:



"I updated my resume as needed and made sure it was ready to be sent on short notice. I made sure to watch the videos OPM posted about the virtual job fair prior to the actual day it started. I also did the check to make sure I had the appropriate software on my computer."

In short: much of your success on the day of the fair is due to the planning you've performed in advance.

AGING A VIRTUAL FAIR: HOW DO YOU STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD IN AN ONLINE EVENT?

- **Have a complete profile.** Upload a photo or avatar, upload your resume, and have all your contact information listed.
- **Be enthusiastic.** The best way to stand out is to express sincere interest in the agency/positions and knowledge of the organization. Be sure to share this with agency reps!
- **Be responsive.** Recruiters are busy. With the expected number of participants, they may have a hard time responding to everyone. To grab (and keep) their attention, respond in a timely manner to chats. Be clear and concise in your questions and answers.
- **Make time for direct engagement** with agencies - the most valuable part of a virtual career fair is interacting with agency reps.
- **Make the interaction meaningful.** Stand out by asking “outside the box” questions and

not standard questions where you could find answers on their website.

- **Network!** Take advantage of the “who’s here” functionality in virtual shows. This is the perfect time to talk with people in your cohort as well.
- **Budget enough time and spend more than an hour** in the virtual show. Between the educational components (when applicable) and the time with agency reps, you’d be surprised how quickly the time flies by!

COMMUNICATING VIRTUALLY: 2 TIPS TO REMEMBER

- Remember that **you are chatting with agency representatives (people in control of your future!)** and not your best friend on g-chat. Don’t use abbreviations or slang and be sure to check your spelling.
- If agency reps are taking a few minutes to respond to your question, **don’t keep messaging the recruiters.** They see your message and will respond to you when they can.





PRO TIP:

In addition to OPM's official Virtual Job Fair, the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development hosted a live, Google On-Air Hangout in order to communicate directly with prospective applicants. Be on the lookout for other events coordinated by specific agencies.

Again, Nikki Boudreaux from the PMF Class of 2013, engaged in the following process:



"I found the position I ended up securing on the virtual job fair. I constantly checked the booths of the agencies I was most interested in. Many of them had a file posted with their job vacancy announcement that contained specific instructions on how to apply (where to send your resume and/or cover letter). I just followed the instructions that were provided. Several days later I received an email from the agency requesting an interview, and it went well. They offered me the position and I accepted."

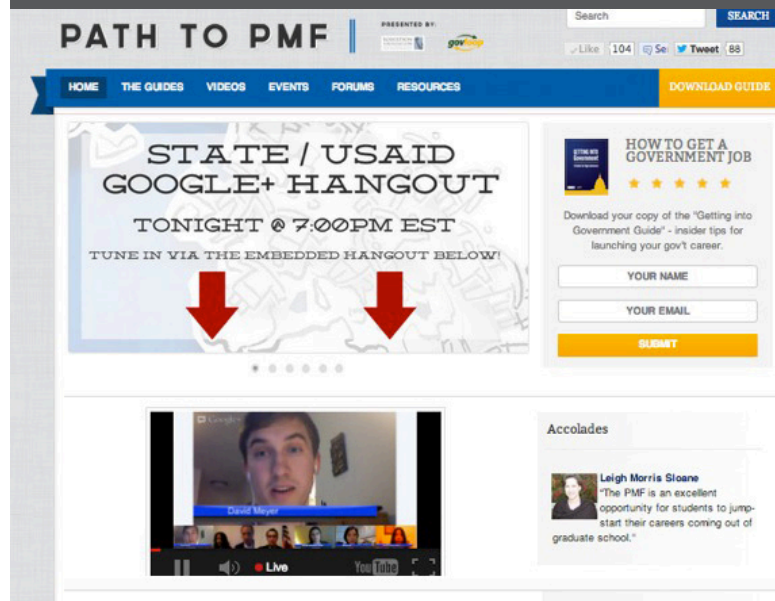
If you take these few actions, you will likely increase your chances of landing some interviews and, ultimately, getting an offer.

AFTER THE JOB FAIR: MANAGING JOB OFFERS

Managing the virtual fair is tricky, but the real work comes in managing the job offers. We recommend that you not accept the first job offer unless you have taken the time to do some due diligence about the job first. Probably the biggest mistake people make is to get really excited about getting a job offer and then accept it right away.

It's pretty important to do a lot of research about the position, agency, etc. Many people accept offers without meeting their new direct supervisor - unsurprisingly, a lot of them are unhappy in their positions now. This seems obvious, but a lot of PMFs get caught up in the excitement of the fair and getting job offers, and neglect to make sure what the work environment is really going to be like. Below are some more helpful tips.

- **Ask for some time to consider the offer and be considerate of the agency's time.** If you are offered a job, but you have more interviews scheduled, the offering agency would understand if you requested some additional time to respond.
- **Give them a time frame and stick to it.** Be respectful of an agency's desire to acquire as close to their top choice as possible. If you
- **...but if you really wanted that one from the outset, go for it!** If you receive an offer from an agency you are genuinely interested in working for, and you are impressed by their PMF Program and the type of work you will be doing there as a fellow, accept the offer. Then inform other agencies where you have applied that you accepted another offer so that they can extend offers to other Finalists.
- **Don't be shy - call if you want to learn the results.** If you haven't heard from the organization that is your first choice, then call the POC and ask if you have made their final list.
- **Get a sense of security (clearances, that is):** If you're offered a position that requires a security clearance that you don't have yet, understand that you may have to wait a year or more! Definitely get another job in the meantime, so you can afford to eat while you wait.



know immediately or sooner than agreed upon that you do not intend to accept, let them know as soon as possible.

SECTION 7

THE JOB

We want to be upfront with you. Here's the reality of the placement phase, as indicated by Dave Uejio, PMF Class of 2008 and now in senior leadership at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau:



"This was the hardest part of the whole process. It took me five or six months to secure a position. I was named a Finalist in March and then it was August before I accepted my position. I went to graduate school right out of undergrad so I was lacking full time work experience, which made me very anxious. I was having phone interviews and either wasn't liking the positions I was offered or wasn't getting the positions that I did like, so it was very anxiety provoking. There was a sense amongst my friends and I that once we became Finalists, the hard work is over, and that is definitely not the case. I would say that the hard work is just beginning."

Nikki Boudreaux, PMF Class of 2013, agreed: "Becoming a Finalist is half the battle. The real work begins when it's time to secure a position!" She offered even more great advice for this stage of the game:



1. "Apply, Apply, Apply!" If you become a Finalist, the more resumes you send out, the better. Constantly check the list of job vacancies and be active during the job fair. Don't sit around and wait for that one perfect position at that one agency. Be open to several agencies and positions and get your resume out there.

2. Get familiar with performance based interview questions! Every interview I had used PBI questions. You can look up examples and prepare ahead of time. Have examples of various scenarios in which you did xyz on hand. After several interviews I started anticipating the types of questions agencies would ask so I prepared a "cheat sheet" of sorts to have on hand.

3. Don't let one bad interview get you down. Most of us probably bombed an interview (or two). Just prepare harder for the next one and practice."

Continue being diligent as long as necessary. Follow up after the career fair with all the agencies that impressed you. If you are not called back for any interviews after applying, get on the phone or computer and be in touch with all the agencies that are still posting positions for which you are qualified.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO FIND A PLACEMENT?

It's important to keep in mind that you have one full year to find a placement as a Finalist - and it can take anywhere from a few days after an interview, right up to the one year mark. Most offers are received two to three months after an interview.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR THOSE WHO ARE HAVING TROUBLE FINDING A PLACEMENT?

When it comes to the placement process, it can take awhile. We heard two pieces of advice from our interviews.

1. BE PATIENT. Consider the advice of Kaleigh Emerson, PMF Class of 2010 and now at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, who waited many months before she was hired:



"You have to be really patient and not start stressing until December. It's hard to not have a job for that long but federal government hiring managers are working on a different timeline than the job seeker. So try to find some part-time work between grad school and a PMF position. I know several people who were offered positions in early summer, but I was volunteering and asked, 'can I start in November?'" I also felt like August was really late, but I have met a lot of people for whom August was when they got positions. Be patient. Positions will open up!"

Jessica Cagley, PMF Class of 2010 and now at the U.S. Agency for International Development, told us: "I was not placed for 10 months, although I did turn down 3 jobs before taking my final (dream!) job. Stay positive and remember that the right job is worth the wait!"

"IF YOU ARE 3-6 MONTHS INTO THE PROCESS AND NOT FINDING A POSITION, IT MAY BE IMPORTANT TO LOOK AT WHETHER YOU ARE BEING TOO NARROW IN YOUR SEARCH. ARE YOU RULING OUT JOBS THAT WOULD DEVELOP SOLID TRANSFERRABLE SKILLS BUT NOT IN YOUR PREFERRED AGENCY? ARE YOU THINKING YOU NEED THE PERFECT JOB FROM YOUR FIRST PMF APPOINTMENT? GET INTO AN AGENCY, FOCUS ON SKILL DEVELOPMENT, AND MAXIMIZE THE ROTATION AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES."

Jennifer Niggemeier, Director of Graduate Career Services & Alumni Relations, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy



2. BE PERSISTENT. Bev Godwin, PMF Class of 1982 and now a senior executive at the General Services Administration, said:



"My advice to new and future PMFs is: if you have a place or an issue area you know you want to work on, and they don't have an advertised opening, it may be because they don't know about the program. In addition to what vacancies people put in there, it doesn't hurt to also research and explore and interview at other positions and then tell them about the PMF program."

Pat Hodgens, PMF Class of 2013, reinforced this message:



"If you are a Finalist, it is your responsibility to find a job, not OPM's or the PMF program's. Yes, you will be part of a smaller hiring pool, but you are not guaranteed a job, particularly in this fiscal climate. Reach out to everyone in your network and people who do the type of work you want to do early and often."

HOW DO I DETERMINE WHAT LOCATION IS RIGHT FOR ME?

This question is important if your default is not Washington, DC. Robert Weisberg, PMF Class of 2001 and now at the Department of Housing and Urban Development, summed up the difference between DC and the field in this way:



“The only aspect that people have to appreciate is that in government the headquarters and the field are two different atmospheres and they have to appreciate that if they are not at headquarters, they are in a different realm. Sometimes at headquarters, they have higher pay or higher grade levels than in the field. Ultimately, if you really want to work with people, being in the field is more rewarding than just being in the office and talking about policy.”

For others, it’s more cut and dry, with DC being your only option. Kaleigh Emerson, PMF Class 2010, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, stated:



“After having been through my PMF experience, I would recommend that people try to be in DC. That’s where the most networking opportunities are, where the training and all the mentoring takes place. If you want to go to a regional office after your two years in PMF, you can do it, but I would recommend spending those two years in DC or at least at a headquarters office. For instance, CDC is in Atlanta...so DC or headquarters.”

Another anonymous advocate of the DC option from the PMF Class of 2008 suggested that you can start in Washington, but you don’t have to stay there:



“For those who do not particularly want to live in DC, I still highly recommend spending the 2 years of the PMF in Washington. In agencies with numerous PMFs, the rotation process, promotion process, and networking go more smoothly. Also, the PMF community is much more active in DC. These benefits are invaluable, and can help you transition out of DC into a job/location you are interested in long-term. Rotations out of DC can also help with that transition.”

Of course, flexibility might just be your best policy. That’s the approach Sarah Young, PMF Class of 2011 and now at the Department of Housing and Urban Development, recommended:



“I hoped to be in DC, but I was willing to take almost any agency. It is better to get in as a PMF and learn from your initial position even if it is not a perfect fit. You can often transfer either within your agency or even to another agency as a PMF.”

In the end, the right answer here (as with most decisions) is, “It depends.” Focus on your preference, but be agile enough to follow the opportunities that present themselves.

AFTER YOU’VE NAILED DOWN YOUR APPOINTMENT

Once you have received your appointment, the PMF Coordinator for your agency will update your status online and provide a start date for your Fellowship. You will still need to clear a background check and complete your graduate studies to begin your position as a PMF Fellow.

SUMMARY

So that's it! That's all that you need to know about the PMF application process in 100 pages or less. We hope this guide and the accompanying web-based resources were helpful to you.

As we conclude this guide, we want you to keep in mind these thoughts from Pat Hodgens, Class of 2013:



"Remember that the process isn't perfect: I know many, many people who would have been amazing PMFs but did not make it through the first round. Approach the process realistically and remember that, like all hiring, there's a lot of luck involved."

Of course, luck has been said to be that moment when preparation meets opportunity and, if you're reading this guide, you have engaged in preparation that will increase your chances of success.

If you are one of the people who are lucky enough to make it, would you do us a favor? If you used this guide and it helped you to become a Finalist and get a job with an agency, would you let us know? Send an email to andrew@govloop.com and tell us your story.

Who knows? Maybe you will be passing along your own hard-won advice to the next generation of PMFs in a future iteration of this guide!

We wish you the best in the application process - and sincerely hope that you're one of them.

"Be yourself: If you don't get in, then it was not meant to be (this year), but you don't want to fake your way in just to find out that it's not a good match. Be your best self on interviews and make a good impression, but don't apply for jobs that you're not interested in. That is a waste of your time and the agency's time. Get going on contacting agencies of interest as soon as you become a Finalist; don't wait!"



Ginny Hill, Class of 2007 and PMF Coordinator, National Institutes of Health (NIH)

"NOW IN MY LATER YEARS OF MY CAREER, [BEING A PMF IS] ALMOST LIKE A BADGE OF HONOR. MANY TIMES I'LL BE IN A MEETING AND SOMEBODY'S TALKING ABOUT SOMEONE THEY'RE GOING TO HIRE AND SAY 'AND THEY'RE A PMF' AND I'LL SAY 'WELL, I WAS ONE' AND THEY'LL BE LIKE 'OH, THAT'S COOL!' SO IT'S SORT OF LIKE YOU'VE BEEN IN AN IVY LEAGUE SCHOOL AND IT TELLS PEOPLE SOMETHING ABOUT YOU THAT HELPS YOU THROUGHOUT YOUR CAREER."

Bev Godwin, PMF Class of 1982, General Services Administration



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

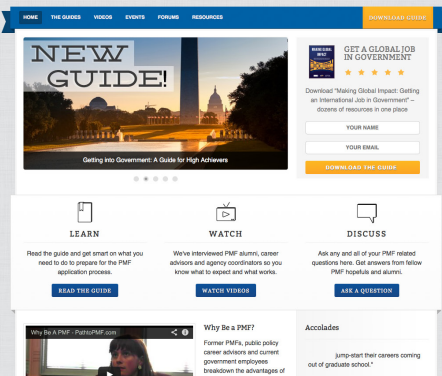


PRO TIP:

Please join us in the PathtoPMF.com discussion thread (<http://pathtopmf.com/blog/>) to share your experiences and ask any further questions that you may have regarding the PMF selection process!

Be sure to check out our video tips as well:
<http://pathtopmf.com/pmf-videos/>

PATH TO PMF



Path to PMF Website

www.pathtopmf.com

Robertson Foundation for Government

www.rffg.org

GovLoop—Knowledge Network for Government

www.govloop.com

Official Presidential Management Fellows Program

www.pmf.gov

PMF Listserv

listserv.opm.gov/wa.exe?SUBED1=PMF&A=1

Government Pathways for Students and Recent Graduates

www.opm.gov/hiringreform/pathways/

National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA)

www.naspaa.org/

USAJOBS

www.usajobs.gov/

PMF Fellows Blog

www.pmfellow.blogspot.com/

Presidential Management Alumni Group

www.pmag.org/pmf_resources.htm

Judith Labiner, Brookings Institution: “Looking for the Future Leaders of Government? Don’t Count on PMI’s”

www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2003/08/22governance-labiner

Graham Drake, University of Kentucky: “Evaluating the Presidential Management Fellows Program”

www.martin.uky.edu/Capstones_2010/Drake.pdf

Laurel McFarland, NASPAA: “Blazing Graduate Pathways into Federal Service”

www.govexec.com/pdfs/040910ar1.pdf

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Robertson Foundation and GovLoop appreciate the many people who shared their experience and expertise with us for this guide through a series of surveys and interviews. We especially want to thank the following individuals for providing critical insight into the PMF process for this report:

LISA ALLISON-LEE, *Department of Veterans Affairs, Agency PMF Coordinator*

JEFFREY BARTELLI, *PMF Class of 2013, Department of Labor*

NIKKI BOUDREAUX, *PMF Class of 2013, Veterans Health Administration*

ASHLEY CASSELS, *PMF Class of 2010, Small Business Administration*

STEVE CHU, *PMF Class of 2011, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services*

KALEIGH EMERSON, *PMF Class of 2010, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services*

ELIZABETH FISCHER, *PMF Class of 2011, Department of Health and Human Services*

CHRISTOPHER GEE, *PMF Class of 2005, Department of Homeland Security*

BEV GODWIN, *PMF Class of 1982, General Services Administration*

STEPHANIE BOOMHOWER, *Stephanie Boomhower, Assistant Director of Career Services, School of Global Policy and Strategy, University of California, San Diego*

GINNY HILL, *PMF Class of 2007, PMF Coordinator, National Institutes of Health*

PAT HODGENS, *PMF Class of 2013, Department of Labor*

KATHRYN NEEPER, *PMF Class of 2008, Broadcasting Board of Governors*

JENNIFER NIGGEMEIER, *Director, Graduate Career Services at University of Michigan Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy*

CHERIE TAKEMOTO, *PMF Class of 1982, Department of Health and Human Services*

DAVE UEJIO, *PMF Class of 2008, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau*

JENI WEBB, *PMF Class of 2011, Department of Housing and Urban Development*

ROBERT WEISBERG, *Class of 2001, Department of Housing and Urban Development*

BRIDGET SHEA WESTFALL, *PMF Class of 2005, Administration for Children and Families*

SARAH YOUNG, *PMF Class of 2011, Department of Housing and Urban Development*

The Robertson Foundation and GovLoop are grateful for their dedicated commitment to public service careers.

In addition, GovLoop would like to acknowledge the members of its internal team that conducted the interviews, coalesced the information, and contributed to the creation of this guide:

LEAD WRITERS:

ANDREW KRZMARZICK, *GovLoop Director of Community Engagement*

SHARON MCCOY, *GovLoop Graduate Fellow*

LEAD EDITORS:

TIMOTHY “BO” KEMPER, *Robertson Foundation for Government Executive Director*

STEVE RESSLER, *GovLoop Founder and President*

EDITOR:

PAT FIORENZA, *GovLoop Senior Research Analyst*

LEAD DESIGNER:

JEFF RIBEIRA, *GovLoop Senior Interactive Designer*

DESIGNER:

RUSSELL YERKES, *GovLoop Design Fellow*

PHOTO CREDITS:

[U.S. Army RDECOM Flickr](#)

If you have any questions or feedback pertaining to this guide, please contact andrew@govloop.com.



