

United States Department of Agriculture

Student Employment Opportunities

Frequently Asked Questions

For general questions about the recruitment of students including recent graduates, volunteers, third party internships, students with disabilities and Veterans - please contact the Department Student Employment Program Manager, Wenndy Carrasco at USDA.Internships@dm.usda.gov.

1. Who qualifies to apply for the USDA Pathways Internship Program?

A student who is: a U.S. Citizen or U.S. Permanent Resident; at least 16 years of age; currently enrolled or accepted for future enrollment in an accredited school (*including high schools, home-schools, certificate programs, college/university*), available for full-time or part-time work; a G.P.A. of 2.0 or higher; and meets the requirements of the vacancy.

2. Who qualifies to apply for the USDA Pathways Recent Graduates Program?

Recent graduates who have completed, within the previous two years, a qualifying Associates, Bachelor's, Master's, Professional, Doctorate, Vocational or Technical degree or certificate from a qualifying educational institution. Veterans unable to apply within two years of receiving their degree, due to military service obligation, have as much as six years after degree completion to apply.

3. Who qualifies to apply for the USDA Pathways Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program?

Individuals who have completed within the past two years, a qualifying advanced degree (*e.g., Master's or Professional degree*). An individual may apply for the PMF Program more than once as long as he or she meets the eligibility criteria. However, an individual can become a Finalist and subsequently apply for the PMF Program.

4. If I graduate this spring and have not applied to another school am I still eligible for an internship?

If someone has just graduated from a degree program and has not yet applied to another school, the person will not qualify for an internship position. In order to qualify, the applicant must be currently enrolled in a degree or certificate program and/or have been accepted to another program. A student enrolled in GED courses and pursuing a GED

diploma meets the definition of student. We strongly recommend graduates to apply to the recent graduates program. For more information send an email to USDA.internships@dm.usda.gov.

5. Are internships for the summer only?

In most cases, yes; however, some USDA internship opportunities are available throughout the year. Each agency and internship program has its own hiring criteria and deadlines. Students interested in learning more about internship opportunities, how to apply should contact the Agency Student Employment Coordinator and/or search www.USDA.USAJOBS.gov for vacancies.

6. What is the deadline to apply for the USDA Pathways Internship and/or the Recent Graduates Program, and when should I expect to hear if I have been selected?

For the Pathways Internship and Recent Graduate Programs the vacancy announcement will clearly provide the application period with a closing date. An applicant's submission is reviewed by human resources professionals and qualified applicants are provided to the hiring manager. After reviewing the application of each qualified applicant, the hiring manager will contact the selected intern. This can take up to 2 weeks. Generally, summer internships are posted to www.USDA.USAJobs.gov beginning the last week of January through mid April. Notification of selection/placement is made between mid-April and mid-May for summer internships. Orientation day is typically held in mid-June for headquarter interns, and orientation for field interns start on their first day of work. For fall internships, applications are accepted for posted vacancies, beginning the last week of July through August. For spring internships, applications are accepted for posted vacancies from September through November. All available internships are posted on

United States Department of Agriculture

www.usda.usajobs.gov. Input “student” in the “what” field for internship opportunities.

7. What is the deadline to apply for a Volunteer/Unpaid Internship opportunity and when should I expect to hear the results?

To apply for unpaid volunteer opportunities, applications are accepted year round. We strongly suggest applicants begin searching for vacancy postings for the summer beginning the last week of January through mid April. Notification of placements are made between mid-April and mid-May of each year for summer. Orientation day starts in mid-June for headquarter interns, and orientation for field interns starts on their first day of work. For the fall and spring, go to www.usda.usajobs.gov and search for “student” where all available volunteer unpaid internships will be posted, or contact the Agency Student Employment Coordinator to get more specific details.

8. How much will students get paid?

Most intern position announcements provide the salary and GS level in the vacancy announcement. The term "GS" stands for **General Schedule**. It is a Federal Government pay-scale. As such, pay scales for internships vary based on the position, level of experience, and educational level achieved. The Federal Government Pay Scale can be found at: www.OPM.gov, click on “View Salaries and Wages”.

9. How long are summer internships?

Summer internships vary in length of time based on agency need and position. Generally internships can begin anytime in May or June and usually end in August. Terms of employment may be negotiated on a case-by-case basis with the hiring manger.

10. How many interns will USDA hire?

Annually, USDA hires approximately 5,000 to 8,500 students nationwide. This number varies each year and is based on workforce needs and funding availability.

11. Where are internship and recent graduates opportunities located?

Internship, Recent Graduate, and Volunteer/Unpaid opportunities are located across the United States

and the District of Columbia as well as U.S. Territories/Possessions including American Samoa, Navassa Island, Northern Mariana Islands, Jarvis Island, Baker Island, Guam, Howland Island, Johnston Atoll, Kingman Reef, Midway Islands, Palmyra Atoll, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, and Wake Atoll. Each vacancy announcement lists the location of the opportunity.

12. Where can I find information about USDA, Mission Areas and Agencies/Offices?

Visit our website, www.usda.gov. Scroll down until you see "Mission Areas and Offices" to learn about our 7 Mission Areas, 19 Agencies, or 16 Offices.

13. Sustainability is an initiative. Are there internships for those with Sustainability Studies majors?

Yes. Students with diverse majors and interests are sought by USDA agencies for work on the Sustainability Initiative. Agencies more likely to be focused on the balance between economic growth and conservation, environmental policies, and ethics would be Agricultural Research Service (ARS), Economic Research Service (ERS), Forest Service, Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS), National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), and Rural Development (RD) to name a few. If you are interested, visit the Mission Area Natural Resources and Environment which has two agencies: Forest Service (<http://www.fs.fed.us/fsjobs/>) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/employment.html>)

14. If an applicant is particularly interested in a discipline, for example, Soil Science, where can this applicant apply for an internship?

If an applicant’s interest is soil science, the applicant should search and apply on www.usda.usajobs.gov for any internship, volunteer or recent graduate opportunity offered through the Agricultural Research Service, Forest Service, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and Natural Resources Conservation Service.

15. If an applicant is particularly interested in a discipline, for example, Animal Science, where can this applicant apply for an internship?

United States Department of Agriculture

If an applicant's interest is animal science, the applicant can search on USAjobs.gov and apply for any internship, volunteer or recent graduate opportunity offered through the Agricultural Marketing Services; Agricultural Research Service; Animal Plant Health Inspection Service; Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration; and National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

16. If an applicant is particularly interested in a discipline, for example, Agricultural Management, where can this applicant apply for an internship?

If an applicant's interest is agricultural management, the applicant can search on USAjobs.gov and apply for any internship, volunteer or recent graduate opportunity offered through the Agricultural Marketing Services; Agricultural Research Service; Animal Plant Health Inspection Service; Farm Service Agency; Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration; and National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

17. If an applicant is particularly interested in a discipline, for example, IT Computer Science, where can this applicant apply for an internship?

If an applicant's interest is IT computer science, the applicant can search on USAjobs.gov and apply for any internship, volunteer or recent graduate opportunity offered through the Agricultural Marketing Services; Agricultural Research Service; Animal Plant Health Inspection Service; Economics Research Services; Farm Service Agency; Food and Nutrition Services; Food Safety and Inspection Service; Forest Service; Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration; National Institute of Food and Agriculture; and Rural Development.

18. How long is my application kept after I apply? Do I need to apply again after the summer for the Fall/next year?

You must apply to each vacancy announcement separately. Your file is only maintained for the position to which you apply.

19. What work schedule is expected of an Intern?

Your work schedule will depend on the requirements of the position and need by the Agency. The hiring manager will determine your work schedule, to

include hours, days of the week, and start and end dates.

20. Do I have to write an essay?

No. Essays are not required. A complete online application is required to compete for all USDA student employment programs.

21. What happens after the completion and conversion process of the USDA Pathways Internship Program?

Interns may be converted to a permanent position or, in some limited circumstances, to a term position lasting 1-4 years, within 120 days of successful completion of the program. This type of position will be identified in the vacancy announcement as conversion eligible. To be eligible for conversion, Interns must:

- Complete at least 640 hours of work experience acquired through the Internship Program.
- Complete degree or certificate requirements.
- Meet the qualification standards for the position to which the Intern will be converted.
- Meet agency-specific requirements as specified in the Participant's Agreement
- Perform their job successfully
- Agencies may waive up to 320 of the required 640 hours of work for Interns who demonstrate high potential as evidenced by outstanding academic achievement and exceptional job performance.
- In addition, students working in agencies through third-party internship providers may use up to 320 hours toward the 640 hour requirement.
- Time spent under previous Internship Program appointments may count towards required work experience hours.

22. What happens after completion of the USDA Pathways Recent Graduates Program?

Recent Graduates may be converted to a permanent position or, in some limited circumstances a term appointment lasting 1-4 years. To be eligible for conversion, Recent Graduates must have:

- Successfully completed at least 1-year of continuous service in addition to all requirements of the Program.
- Demonstrated successful job performance.
- Met the qualifications for the position to which the Recent Graduate will be converted.

United States Department of Agriculture

23. What happens after the completion of the PMF program?

After successful Program completion and job performance, the PMF may be converted to a permanent position or, in some limited circumstances a term appointment lasting 1-4 years in the competitive service.

24. What about English Language proficiency?

Successful candidates for internships, recent graduates and fellowships will possess skills in listening, reading, speaking and writing in English. It is recommended that applicants are able to write comprehensively in English as an intern.



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