



USDA Pathways Programs Fact Sheet for Interns

This Fact Sheet provides information on changes to the USDA Student Employment Programs.

Background

On December 27, 2010, President Barack Obama signed Executive Order 13562, Recruiting and Hiring Students and Recent Graduates. The Executive Order created the Internship Program, the Recent Graduates Program, and revised the Presidential Management Fellows Program.

Key Points

- The USDA Pathways Programs replaces the USDA Student Employment Programs (SCEP and STEP)
- The USDA Internship Program targets students enrolled in a wide variety of educational institutions
- The USDA Recent Graduates Program targets recent college graduates and graduates of other OPM approved qualifying institutions
- The USDA Presidential Management Fellows Program (PMF) targets individuals with advance degrees
- The Pathways Programs became effective July 10, 2012
- Eligible STEPs and SCEPs may be transitioned to the USDA Internship Program
- Eligible SCEPs may be converted to career-conditional appointments
- Students graduating from school in less than 180 days are not eligible for the USDA Internship Program
- Available Recent Graduate opportunities will be posted in USAJobs and in the USDA Student Application Portal
- The Pathways regulation requires students and recent graduates to sign a Pathways Participant Agreement
- Mentoring, performance feedback, and training are major components of the USDA Pathways Programs
- All Pathways participants will be appointed under the Schedule D Hiring Authority
- Students will be referred to as “Student Trainees”
- Recent Graduates will be referred to as “Recent Graduates”

- Presidential Management Fellows will be referred to as PMFs
- Veteran’s Preference applies to each Pathways vacancy
- USDA will recruit PMFs from an OPM approved list of finalists
- Agencies may terminate Pathways participants for misconduct, suitability, poor performance, or at the expiration of the Pathways Participation Agreement

Comparison of USDA Intern Programs

Comparison	STEP	SCEP	Pathways Intern	Pathways Recent Graduate
Temporary	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Eligibility Requirements	Current Student	Current Student	Current Student	Graduated within the past 2 years*
Position must be related to academic field	No	Yes	No**	No**
Eligible for conversion to the competitive service	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Veteran’s Preference Applies	No	No	Yes	Yes
Public Notice Requirement	No	No	Yes	Yes

*Two- year requirement may be extended up to six years for veterans who, due to military service obligations, were precluded from applying in the two-year window

** Certain positions require academic field of study to be directly related to position

Where to Find Additional Information

For a list of frequently asked questions pertaining to the Pathways Programs, please visit https://help.usajobs.gov/index.php/Pathways_FAQs

For information regarding the transition period, please contact your Human Resource Office.

For information regarding the USDA Pathways Programs, please contact Jen Sweet, USDA Pathways Programs Officer, Office of Human Resource Management, jennifer.sweet@dm.usda.gov or 202-690-3807.