

USDA Forest Service Society of American Foresters Convention 2018

Hiring Event Informational Materials

Online Hiring Event:
September 25-October 9, 2018
On-site Recruitment Event:
October 4-5, 2018

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1. Introduction

The Forest Service will hold an online National Collective Hiring event to coincide with the 2018 Society of American Foresters (SAF) National Convention in Portland, OR, October 3-6. We will be hiring Pathways Program students and recent graduates, and internal merit applicants, to include Resource Assistant Program, Public Land Corps, Land Management Workforce Flexibility Act and Veterans Employment Opportunity Act eligibles. The materials below are intended to help the regional point of contact (POC), hiring managers, and line officers understand the process for this hiring event.

This year there applications will be only be accepted through USA jobs, though we will have forest service recruiters, HR specialists, and other agency volunteers onsite to assist with the application process. After HR has determined which applicants are qualified, subject matter experts will screen the qualified applicants to determine who to interview. This year, for onsite applicants, interviews will not be conducted at the convention. All interviews will take place in November and will be conducted via telephone. All applicants will be evaluated consistently and at the same time. The entire process will be conducted using a centralized national committee with support coming from the regions. The national committee is comprised of people from forest management and human resources national collective recruitment and hiring teams. All selections and job offers will be made by Friday December 14th.

For a list of Frequently Asked Questions and their answers see Appendix A.

2. What Is the Pathways Program

2.1 Student Interns

The Pathways Internship program offers career development opportunities to students enrolled in qualifying educational programs or institutions. Interns and recent graduates receive on the job training and mentorship. The Internship Program replaces the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) and Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP). This Program is designed to provide students enrolled in a wide variety of educational institutions, from high school to graduate level, with opportunities to work in agencies and explore Federal careers while still in school and while getting paid for the work performed. While interning, the student must complete 640 hours of training, adequately perform in their job, and maintain their status as a student. The training hours may include previous relevant work experience. Upon successful completion of the program, student interns may be converted to a permanent position. Visit the [OPM website](#) for more information.

2.2 Recent Graduates

The Recent Graduates Program affords developmental experiences in the Federal Government intended to promote possible careers in the civil service to individuals who have recently graduated from qualifying educational institutions or programs. To be eligible, applicants must apply within two years of degree or certificate completion (except for veterans precluded from doing so due to their military service obligation, who have up to six years after degree completion to apply). Successful applicants are placed in a dynamic, developmental program with the potential to lead to a civil service career in the Federal Government. The probationary period of this program lasts for 1 year (unless the training requirements of the position warrant a longer and more structured training program). Visit the [OPM website](#) for more information.

3. Timeline of the Hiring Event

The Timeline for each component is listed in the following sections.

3.1 Critical Dates for POC

August 10 th	Regional POC Introductory Meeting
August 23 rd	Positions must be submitted by the regional POC to saf_hiring@fs.fed.us
August 24 th	Orientation webinar for regional POCs
August 27 th -31 th	HR communicates with Regional POCs if needed to finalize position details.
August 23 th - November 13 th	POC's identify list of subject matter experts (SME) and teams of regional interviewers.

3.2 Online Application Process

September 25 th - October 9 th	Vacancy announcements posted for merit positions
September 28 th - October 9 th	Vacancy announcements posted for student intern and recent graduate positions
October 10 th – November 1 st	Qualifications are determined by HR

October 31 st	Webinar for Subject Matter Experts
November 2 nd – 6 th	Certification lists created. HR creates the Unique Application List and provides to National Team
November 7 th -13 th	Applications are prescreened by Subject Matter Experts and top candidates are identified for Interviewing.
November 14 th -19 th	“SAF_Hiring” email is sent to candidates that make first cut. Email provides link to candidate to schedule interview and provide reference checks through Checkster Application.
November 14 th -23 rd	Reference Check done using Checkster Application.
November 15 th	Webinar for Interviewers
November 26 th -30 th	Regional teams conduct interviews and submit data through online forms.
November 30 th	Checkster Reference Check Report due from GovStrive
December 3 rd -4 th	Applicant Material packaged and sent to POC. POC communicates with hiring managers to rank applicants
December 5 th -7 th	Final Recommendations for selection due from Hiring Managers to POC
December 10 th	All data is compiled for Selecting Officials. Job Position Matrix created for selection process.

3.3 Selections

December 10 th – 14 th	Core team, Regional POCs (with significant number of positions) and Selection Official meet in Albuquerque, NM to de-conflict, approve recommendations, and make tentative job offers.
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3.4 Post-Selections

December 17 th	SAF_Hiring email is sent to all candidates not selected.
December 17 th	Provide database of non-selected candidates to Regional Recruiting Officer or NR Directors for future outreach.

4. Regional Point of Contact

The regional POC will help the region collect information for submitting positions, identify subject matter experts and interviewers from their region, provide recommendations for selections, and provide pre-developed outreach material to their region. Each region may determine how they approach these items.

5. Subject Matter Experts

The regional POC will provide a list of names of subject matter experts (SME) to the national committee no later than October 15th. The SME should have the capability to screen applications for the forester, forestry tech, and biological scientist (focus on NEPA, GIS, recreation, and natural resource positions) series. For every 5 positions submitted at least one SME must be available Wednesday November 7th – Tuesday November 13th to screen the applications of those found qualified.

The SME will screen qualified applicants to determine whether or not they should be interviewed. All materials used during the screening process will be provided to the SME and a training webinar will be conducted on October 31st. The webinar will be recorded and made available to those who cannot attend. This will be an electronic process and as such each SME is required to have access to the internet and the ability to be on the network.

6. Interview Teams

All interviews will be conducted consistently. The same set of questions and the time allotted will be identical for all intern, recent grad, and merit applicants. Each interview will be conducted in teams of 2 and will last for approximately 30 minutes. Each region will be asked to support the interview teams in accordance with the number of positions submitted.

6.1 Online Applicant Interviews

Each region will be asked to identify people to support the online applicant interview process. For every 5 positions, a region will need to supply 2 interview teams. The names for these teams will be provided by the POC to the national committee no later than October 15th. Each interview team will consist of two interviewers that are at the same physical location. Interviewer teams must be available November 26th – 30th.

Each team will be provided with electronic forms that include a script of what to say, the questions to ask, and a score sheet. This will be an electronic process and as such each interview team is required to have access to the internet and the ability to be on the network. A webinar outlining the interview process will be conducted on November 15th. The webinar will be recorded and made available to those who cannot attend.

7. Reference Checks

Reference checks will be conducted using an automated online system called Checkster. Each applicant that receives an interview will be prompted to create a login to the Checkster system and provide their references and corresponding email address. An email will be sent to each reference with an online survey that can be completed either via a computer or mobile device. All references will receive a reply due date and instructions on how to submit the reference check information. Reference check information will be due by November 30th. All information will be submitted with the application package and made available during the recommendation and selection process.

8. Selection Process

All application packages that include application materials (resume, cover letter, transcripts, etc.), prescreening sheets, interview sheets, and references will be packaged and provided to the POC by December 4th. Each region will have until December 7th to rank all qualified and interviewed candidates for each position. The final rankings **must** be submitted by December 7th to your POC. Selections will take place onsite in Albuquerque, December 10th – 14th, with tentative job offers following. Selecting officials will be comprised of Regional Foresters.

8.1 Veteran's Placement

On Tuesday December 11th, selections for all pathways recentgraduate and intern positions with preference eligible veteran applicants will be confirmed and job offers will be extended.

8.2 Recent Graduate and Merit

On Wednesday December 12th and Thursday December 14th, selections for all remaining recent graduate positions will be made and job offers extended. All merit candidates will be evaluated with the recent graduates during this process.

8.3 Student Interns

On Thursday December 13th and Friday December 14th, selections for all remaining student intern positions will be made and job offers extended.

9. For Question or Concerns

For questions about this event, please email saf_hiring@fs.fed.us.

Appendix A - Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Click on a question below to find out the answer:

WHAT IS AN ONSITE RECRUITMENT AND HIRING EVENT?

WHAT IS THE PATHWAYS INTERNSHIP PROGRAM?

WHAT IS THE PATHWAYS RECENT GRADUATE PROGRAM?

HOW DOES THIS RECRUITMENT EVENT WORK?

WHO ATTENDS THE CONVENTION?

WHAT GRADE LEVELS CAN MANAGERS FILL POSITIONS FOR THIS RECRUITMENT EVENT?

CAN POSITIONS OTHER THAN FORESTRY BE FILLED AT THE SAF CONVENTION?

AS A HIRING MANAGER, WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES?

DO APPLICANTS NEED TO ATTEND THE CONVENTION TO APPLY FOR A POSITION?

WILL WE BE COMPLYING WITH ALL UNION AGREEMENTS?

WHO WILL BE CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEWS?

HOW WILL REFERENCE CHECKS BE CONDUCTED?

WHAT OTHER HIRING AUTHORITIES ARE AVAILABLE AT THE EVENT?

HOW WILL SELECTIONS BE MADE?

What is an onsite recruitment and hiring event? It is an approach to hiring that capitalizes on qualifications and interests of individuals drawn to occupational events and conferences, and utilizes the Pathways Program hiring authorities to target current and recently graduated students for employment. Positions will be advertised under the Pathways Internship Indefinite and Recent Graduate Authorities.

What is the Pathways Internship Program? The Internship Program is for current students. To be eligible a student must meet the following definition: an individual accepted for enrollment or enrolled and seeking a degree in a qualifying educational institution on a full or half-time basis (as defined by the institution in which the student is enrolled). The Internship Program provides students in high school, colleges, trade schools, and other qualifying educational institutions, the opportunity to explore Federal careers as paid employees while still completing their education. [Click](#) for more information.

What is the Pathways Recent Graduate Program? The Recent Graduate Program is for individuals who have graduated from a qualifying educational institution within the last two years. Veterans who are unable to apply within two years of graduation due to their military service have up to six years from graduation to apply. The Recent Graduate Program provides an opportunity an individual to enter into developmental program for a period of 1 year with the potential to lead to a career in the Agency. [Click](#) for more information.

How does this event work? Jobs will be advertised on USAJOBS just before and ending after the convention. Forest Service subject matter experts will be onsite to help individuals apply via USA Jobs at the convention. Interviews will be conducted off-site by teams of managers and professionals after announcements close October 9th.

Who attends the convention? The convention is the largest gathering of foresters in North America. Last year over 4,000 foresters and natural resource professionals attended the SAF Convention. This included approximately 500 students. Competition for funding to attend the Convention is strong making the quality of students who attend the event high. [Click](#) here for more information about the Convention.

What grade levels can managers fill positions for this recruitment event? Internship positions are generally filled at grades-3 through 7, depending upon the individual's qualifications and the vacancy announcement. The following is a general guideline for students applying for an internship: students enrolled in an undergraduate program generally qualify at a GS-3, 4, or 5; students enrolled in a master's program generally qualify up to a GS-7; and students enrolled in a PhD program generally qualify up to a GS-9. Upon graduation, program completion and successful work performance, a student employee may convert to a permanent professional position. The grade levels for conversion include promotion potential of at least a GS-7 for those in a tech series and at least a GS-9 or GS-11 for those in a professional series. Recent graduates will likely qualify for at least a GS-5 to start. Starting grade level at conversion depend upon academic and professional qualifications; future promotions depend upon successful performance and supervisor recommendation.

Can positions other than forestry be filled at the SAF convention? Yes, although most positions that are filled at the SAF convention are forestry and natural resource positions in the GS-460, 462 and 401 series because the target audience for the convention is students majoring in forestry or a related field. The forester series (460) includes positions such as silviculture, timber sale preparation, timber sale administration, and general forestry. The natural resource positions (401) are more general and can include planning and GIS. Forest technician (462) positions can be filled as well. These are the series that we will be focusing on at the Convention. Because we are limited in the number of positions we can take for the recent graduate positions, we will not be accepting positions outside of the 460, 462, or 401 series at this time.

As a hiring manager, what are my responsibilities? The responsibilities of the hiring manager are as follows: 1) Identify the position you would like to fill and determine whether or not you would like to use the Pathways Internship or Recent Graduate authority, 2) begin the paperwork process by working with your regional point of contact (to be identified to the National Team by October 22nd) conduct outreach using the supplied outreach materials, 4) provide any required information to your designated HR coordinator, and 5) be available for any questions that the hiring committee may have for you.

Do applicants need to attend the Convention to apply for a position? No. There will be an opportunity for people to apply online through USAJOBS. We expect all positions to be posted to USAJOBS beginning on September 29th (for interns and recent grads, merit open September 26th). The

announcements will be open for 12 days. All applicants who apply and are moved forward to the interview process will be interviewed beginning November 26th via telephone.

Will we be complying with all union agreements? Yes. All Article 16 requirements and USDA and Forest Service regulations will be followed. All recent graduate positions advertised, at matching series, grades, and position descriptions, will include a merit announcement which will be posted concurrently on USAJOBS. These announcements will be open for 14 days. All merit applicants will go through the same interview and reference check process as the recent graduate applicants. Those merit applicants who receive a high interview score will be combined with the recent graduate applicants from both the online and onsite process who receive high interview scores for consideration. There currently is not a requirement for outreach in Article 16 unless the position has been previously outreached.

Who will be conducting the interviews? Each region/station will be asked to provide interview teams for the online applicants. The teams will be made up of 2 individuals who are in the same location. We expect the those that are invited to be interviewed to do so beginning November 26th. All interviewers will be given a script to read from which contain the interview questions and clear instructions on how to conduct the interview and score the applicant.

How will reference checks be conducted? Reference checks will be conducted using an automated system called Checkster that sends an email to references supplied by the applicant as they schedule an interview. All references must be received by November 30th to be considered as part of the application.

What other hiring authorities are available at the event? The Schedule D authority (e.g., Pathways Intern Indefinite and Recent Graduate) will be the primary external hiring authority used at this event. Forest Service internal and some external merit applicants will be considered alongside recent graduate applicants. HR Specialists and recruiters will be involved provide assistance and answer questions

How will selections be made? A group of Regional Foresters, or designated representatives, will be solicited to make selections.