

Contract Specialist (GS-11)

Major Duties

A contract Specialist (GS-11) is responsible for buying a variety of services and supplies that the government must obtain from outside companies, individuals, educational institutions, and others. Forest Service Contract Specialist write contracts for services and supplies such as:

- Planting trees
- Cutting trees and brush to clear land
- Building and maintaining roads, recreation areas, trails, buildings, etc.
- Training of Forest Service employees
- Doing archaeological exploration
- Purchasing or retaining of heavy equipment, and much more

The Contract Specialist is responsible for preparing documents asking outsiders to submit bids for doing specific Forest Service projects, conducting negotiations, choosing a contractor signing contract documents, and monitoring the contractor's work. This may mean doing things like

- Answering questions that bidders have
- Evaluating bids or proposals
- Negotiating with bidders
- Awarding contract to bidders that offer the best deal to the government
- Reviewing requests or change the contract terms and deciding what to do
- Modifying contracts when necessary
- Reviewing and negotiating claims when contract problems arise
- Approving or disapproving payments and special requests
- Preparing documentation in cases of disputes over contract terms
- Cancelling contracts when in the best interest of the government

A Contract Specialist may also supervise other employees. This involves assigning work, monitoring employee performance, conducting performance appraisals, developing budgets and training plans, etc.

A Typical Day

Frank has been a Contract Specialist for ten years. He started as a Contract Specialist Trainee GS-5 at the Olympic National Forest in Olympia, Washington. Frank was promoted to GS-7, then to GS-9 over a three year period. He then transferred to the Willamette National Forest and was promoted to GS_11. Frank has been in that job for the last seven years.

Frank is always busy working on interesting projects. He recently prepared and mailed a solicitation for tree planting services. It was sent to several dozen private companies asking if they wanted to submit a bid on the project. It will be several weeks before the bids are due. In the meantime, Frank will get many calls with questions from companies that plan to bid for the work.

Frank is also working on a road building project. The bids came in and Frank is now in the process of checking u on the low bidder. If he finds out that they have done good work in the past, Frank will award them the contract to build the road. If they have not done well in the past, Frank will have to take steps and get approval not to award them the project

A Typical Day Continued

Frank oversees many contracts that have already been awarded. Some of these contracts go well and the work gets done on time; other contracts are not so successful. There is one contract in particular that Frank has had some trouble with. It is a contract to clear bush from a trail. The contractor is behind schedule and has done some of the work wrong. Frank will write a letter to the contractor or warn that the work isn't done on schedule, and if the work isn't done right, the Forest Service will have to "Fire" the contractor. Frank doesn't like the idea of doing that because he would have to find another contractor to complete the job. Finding someone else takes time and is not always easy.

Knowledge and Education

A college degree is normally required to be a Contract Specialist (GS-11). A degree in business, economics, law or other related subjects is preferred, although a degree in other areas will also qualify a person for the job. A Contract Specialist should have knowledge and skills in these subjects.

- Business and Contract Law
- Accounting
- Communicating orally and in writing
- Math

Career Path

Here are some jobs that lead to becoming a Contract Specialist (GS-11)

- **Contract Specialist (GS-5)** – This is the starting position for most people. Basic orientation and training is provided to a person in this job. In this job, the person must work under the close supervision of a more experienced Contract Specialist.
- **Contract Specialist (GS-9)** – Duties this person performs include
 - Helping write and developing contract documents
 - Answering questions received from bidders and other Forest Service people
 - Selecting bidders to receive requests for proposals on projects
 - Opening bids at public bid openings
 - Checking bids for completeness
 - Helping Contract Officers hold prework meetings
 - Helping monitor ongoing contract work and reports on compliance