

Presidential Management Fellowship 2021

- I. **What is the PMF?** The PMF is a 2-year, fully paid federal government fellowship; placements range throughout the federal government. During the two years, PMFs do at least one 4 to 6-month rotation in another federal office; with permission, they can do up to two more. One hundred sixty hours of leadership development and training is also provided to PMFs, as well as a mentor. At the end of the two years, there is the opportunity to easily convert to a permanent Federal position. While **the PMF is not a legal fellowship**, and traditional law practice positions are generally not available as “home base” placements, it’s fantastic for students interested in policy, and rotations into OGC’s or other legal offices are sometimes available.
- II. **Consult the PMF website for the final word on all details and questions:**
 - A. Start with the [“Become a PMF” page](#) for a thorough overview of the program and process
 - B. The newest and best resource for application process is the [PMF Applicant Handbook](#) (new this year).
 - C. The best resource to help familiarize you with the online Assessment is the [Assessment Preparation Guide](#).
 - D. There are plenty of other pages of info and FAQs.

III. Online application window

The 2021 PMF application opens at Noon (ET), Wednesday September 30th, 2020, and closes at Noon (ET), Wednesday October 14, 2020. Use [this application window](#).

NOTE: The announcement posted on www.usajobs.gov will not appear until the opening date of the application.

IV. [Eligibility](#)

To be eligible:

- A. Graduates must have completed an advanced degree within the 2 years prior to the opening of the application window. So, those who graduated between September 30, 2018 and September 30, 2020 (i.e., HLS graduates in classes of 2019 and 2020), or
- B. Students must complete an advanced degree by August 31, 2021 (so, HLS students in class of 2021).
- C. Current finalists can reapply, but they forfeit their finalist status when they begin the online assessment.

- D. Non-citizens may apply for a PMF and can be selected as a PMF Finalist, BUT:
 - 1. Non-citizen applicants must still be eligible to work in the US;
 - 2. And **many** federal agencies are legally obligated to hire only citizens, and would need an express OK from Congress to hire a non-citizen. As a result, **positions for non-citizens are EXTREMELY rare.**
 - 3. In addition, non-citizens must become citizens during the two-year PMF period to be able to automatically (“noncompetitively”, in federal employment-speak) convert to a regular employee. If they have not done so, they will have to leave federal government at the end of the 2-year PMF.

- E. No Academic Preferences: According to presenters in prior years, there is no preference for applicants who have already worked in government, and no preference for MPP/MPA graduates over JDs.

v. Selection Timeline

September 30: Application opens at noon (ET)

October 14: Application closes at noon (ET)

Late October-Early November: Adjudication period. OPM confirms applicant eligibility, school accreditation, Veterans’ preference, Native American preference, etc.

November: OPM selects finalists

End of November: OPM expects to announce PMF class of 2021 Finalists

Late 2020: Informational webinar for finalists

2021: Hiring events -- e.g., “virtual” job fairs (broad and, perhaps, agency specific), postings, agency webinars, etc.

August 31, 2021: Deadline to complete degree for student finalists

~Late November 2021: deadline to on-board into a federal position for 2021 finalists (one year from date finalists announced). Note, though, that the hiring agency may request an “appointment eligibility extension”, if a finalist has accepted an offer, but cannot on-board in time (usually this would be due to a lengthy background check or security clearance process).

VI. [Application process](#)

- A. Links: You can access the online application through the link on www.USAJobs.gov, which will take you to the application website (PMF Talent Management System); you

don't need a USAJobs account to apply. Or, you can access the application directly via <https://apply.pmf.gov/>. Application consists of:

B. Resume

1. Note that there is no way to update a resume once submitted; however, if an applicant becomes a finalist, they can send updated info to any agencies to which they apply.
2. Multiple resume formats are OK. Doesn't need to be "federal format". USA Jobs resume builder format not required, but fine to use.
3. Any length is OK (including 1 page), but may not exceed 3 MB in size.
4. Resume MUST include:
 - a. Applicant name
 - b. Contact info (address, email and phone number)
 - c. College/University name
 - d. Qualifying degree program you are pursuing or have completed
5. Resume should NOT include:
 - a. Photo
 - b. Social Security number or student ID number

C. Transcript (**only graduate required; undergraduate is optional**)

1. Your transcript must show that you will complete your degree requirements prior to August 31, 2021.
 - a. Unofficial transcript is OK for application, though if you become a finalist, some agencies may later require official transcript for their application. Whatever is submitted must be **legible** and in English. Because HLS official transcripts have a picture of the law school behind the writing that in some cases can make copies hard to read, we suggest using an unofficial transcript.
 - b. **Beware of encryption problems. An official transcript may show a "void" watermark when scanned or copied; this can make the transcript illegible to OPM, which will then reject the entire application.** You should either use an unofficial transcript or consult Judy on ways to avoid the "void"!
2. Any transcript submitted MUST contain the following elements, because the initial assessment process must validate whether the applicant is in fact eligible for the PMF:
 - a. Applicant's name
 - b. Academic Institution name

- c. Qualifying degree program (complete or pursuing)
 - d. Date degree was or will be awarded
3. For any transcript NOT containing all this information, applicants must supplement the transcript AND a signed letter on letterhead from the HLS registrar that *does* include all these elements. Most significantly, **transcripts for current HLS students do not include anticipated date of degree; you will therefore need to submit a letter from the registrar as well.** (Transcripts for graduates DO contain the required date, so no additional letter is necessary). We have given the registrar a heads-up that these letters will be needed, so it won't be a surprise to them, but **you will need to request the letter with some lead time. *Don't wait till the last minute to do this! If you are considering applying for the PMF, request this letter now.***
- a. You can request a "good standing letter" and "certificate of attendance" from the registrar using [this form](#). Be sure to specify under "special instructions" that you need the letter to specify your anticipated date of degree for the PMF application.
 - b. A [sample "alternative letter"](#) can be found on the PMF website.
4. Make sure your applicant name matches what's on your transcript. If your name is different than what shows on the transcript (*e.g.* if you have recently gotten married and changed your name), add a Word document explaining the discrepancy.

D. Biographical info

- E. Veterans' Preference documentation, if any. There is a strong veterans' preference in PMF hiring (for example, recently, 19% of 204 finalists were vets); if a vet who has been adjudicated eligible for vets' preference applies and is qualified for a posted PMF position, he or she must be hired, or the agency must justify why he or she was not hired. The process is:
1. Submit documentation
 2. Be adjudicated
 3. Once adjudicated, extra points will be added to the assessment

F. Native American/Indian Preference documentation, if any.

G. Application for reasonable accommodations for a disability, if any.

1. Note that the PMF application should be 508-compliant and screen-readable.
2. If you are applying for reasonable accommodations, you will have to describe the accommodations you are requesting and provide supporting documentation; a "schedule A letter" alone is NOT sufficient. The documentation must be current, specifically address the disability, and include a specific recommendation for the accommodation.

- H. Online assessment: For details on the competencies and sample questions, you should consult the [Assessment Preparation Guide](#), which is now available on the PMF website, and linked to at the bottom of the [Become a PMF webpage](#).

You will have to complete four sets of questions, in the order they are presented. All four sections are un-proctored and timed; a 3-minute warning is given near the end of each section. The goal of the assessment is to determine your aptitude to work and take on a leadership role in the federal government.

Once you start any of the four parts, you must complete it in the time allotted unless there is a true emergency.

1. There are 6 “functional competencies” considered in evaluating your answers in the assessment. You should **be sure to answer all questions, at every stage of the application and evaluation process, with these in mind:**
 - a. Flexibility
 - b. Integrity
 - c. Interpersonal Skills
 - d. Public Service Motivation
 - e. Problem Solving
 - f. Written Communication
2. Part A: Situational Judgment: A series of multiple choice questions to assess how you would respond in a given situation (in the past, these have used stop action videos; unclear if current application does.) You’ll have a scenario in the workplace, and be asked “what are you most (or least) likely to do?” This year, there will be 54 items to be completed in 60 minutes.
3. Part B: Life Experience: A series of multiple choice behavioral questions, involving work and education-related experiences. “In the past, when X experience happened, I was likely to do Y.” More personal in nature. This year, there will be 40 items to be completed in 30 minutes.
4. Part C: Problem Solving: A series of 20 multiple choice questions to be completed in 45 minutes to assess critical thinking skills and abilities. Use of a calculator is allowed. There are four types of questions:
 - a. Data Interpretation
 - b. Reasoning
 - c. Quantitative Problem Solving
 - d. Reading Comprehension
5. Part D: Writing:
 - a. Written response to an open-ended prompt or topic.

- b. There is a 150-word minimum, no maximum word limit, and a 25-minute time limit.
 - c. **You CANNOT cut and paste into the application. Any attempt to do so will erase the pasted content and throw up an error message, and the system will record such action.** So, you have to type directly into the application. There is a word counter on the platform.
 - d. Timing for the essays begins as soon as the prompt is viewed.
- I. You will be required to certify that it's all your own work; if this proves to be false, you could be fined or imprisoned, you will be rendered ineligible for the PMF, and you may be barred from all federal government employment.
- J. OPM will let you know that your application has been received.
- K. Factors in selecting finalists: **ONLY** these factors are considered:
 - 1. Have you completed the application, and have you been judged eligible?
 - 2. Your online assessment scores
 - 3. The total number of finalists authorized for the application year. This year, 500 finalists have been authorized.
- L. The PMF application has some quirks, and to make sure that you do not run into technical glitches while applying, and that OPM doesn't end up tossing your application for not meeting strict guidelines, we share the following suggestions and information:
 - 1. Read all the instructions and FAQs on PMF website before beginning the application. OPM has posted an online ["2021 PMF Assessment Preparation Guide"](#) with extremely useful info. We strongly encourage applicants to use this guide.
 - 2. There are a number of informational webinars about the PMF and the application process throughout September; you can find the [list](#) on the PMF website.
 - 3. Collect and arrange all your documents to be ready before you begin uploading them
 - 4. While it is technically possible to complete the online app in multiple sittings (you can save, close, and come back, although you cannot stop in the middle of a section; only between sections), PMF and OPIA **STRONGLY** recommend you do NOT do so. Instead, **we recommend you set aside 4-5 hours to take the exam and upload all documents IN ONE SITTING** to avoid glitches.
 - 5. After you complete and submit each section, you will not be able to go back to modify answers in that section; you will only be able to go on to the next section.

6. Applicants are advised to **apply early in the application window** to avoid technical glitches possibly stemming from the usual large spike in applicants at end of the application period.
7. OPM says that up-to-date versions of Chrome, Edge, Firefox, IE or Safari should be fine as your browser. Make sure your [systems, browsers and document types are compatible](#) with that required by OPM, as described on the OPM website, BEFORE beginning your application.
8. Your password is case sensitive; the password you use with your social security number will be checked against any other time you took the test, so be sure to use the exact same password.
9. NOTE: DOCUMENTS MUST ALL BE **LEGIBLE**. We have been told that a surprisingly large number of applications are rejected at the outset simply because some document(s) are illegible – see section on Transcripts, above.
10. At least in the past, there has been no technical help desk available on weekends, so it is better to submit your online application on a weekday.
11. All claims on your resume and elsewhere, such as language skills, must be “searchable for verification”, meaning that OPM must be able to verify the claim.
12. Male applicants may be obligated to have registered for Selective Service to be a PMF. Go to [the Selective Service website](#) to do so in advance of submitting your application.
13. Make sure you put these email addresses on your “safe” list: pmfapplication@opm.gov (you may use this one for application-related questions); pmf@opm.gov (you may use this one for non-application-related questions) and no-reply@apply.pmf.gov. Check your spam folder regularly anyway. Don’t use an email address to which you’ll lose access during the period of the application or job search window. OPM suggests using your personal email address, rather than your .edu address, to avoid emails getting snagged in spam filters.

M. Finalists will be selected based on their online applications, and notified of their status:

1. PMF indicates this will happen within 4-6 weeks of the application closing, though it may take somewhat longer than predicted.
2. Finalists will be notified by email. The list of PMF finalists will also be posted online, but finalists will only be included in this list if they’ve granted OPM permission. We encourage you to both give OPM permission (so that we can see who from HLS makes finalist and assist them in the job search), and to let us know if you apply for the PMF!

3. Once you are a finalist, you can search the PMF site for postings, and you will be electronically notified of each new PMF posting. There tends to be a spike in postings at both the beginning and end of the year, when government offices may have either unspent money from the prior year, or get new funding.
4. Agencies will also be notified of finalists, and will be free to reach out to them directly.
5. There will also be virtual job fairs for the finalists. Virtual job fairs are conducted online over the course of several days, and are a way for employers and finalists to connect.
6. PMF finalists are also free to reach out to federal offices on their own initiative.
7. Once agencies and finalists connect (either via a virtual job fair or a direct contact), agencies will then interview candidates by phone or in person, as the agency prefers.
8. Finalists have one year from notification of their finalist status to obtain a federal appointment, “onboard”, and become a PMF.
9. There is no appeals process if you are not selected as a finalist, and assessment scores will not be provided to applicants.
10. If you become a finalist, OPM suggests you go into your application and update your resume to include the number of years’ experience you have in any job, along with good, detailed information on your responsibilities and accomplishments; this could get you into a higher pay grade once hired.
11. The application will also ask for the “Top 5 States where you’d be interested in working”. This is an optional question; it has no impact on selection. It’s just to gather more info for OPM to do employment matching.
12. You can also opt to have your resume shared with other federal employers even if you are NOT selected as a PMF Finalist; many federal employers are interested in those who apply for the PMF, as this is to some extent a self-selected attractive group of potential employees.

VII. Some Final Information

A. Averages:

1. 6,000 applications
2. 400 finalists
3. Of whom 60% obtain PMF appointments (in recent years, may have been closer to 70%)

- B. Number of finalists over time:
 - 1. 2016: about 400
 - 2. 2017: 417
 - 3. 2018: 425
 - 4. 2019: 402

- C. At least 10% of finalists “self-withdraw” (i.e., take non-federal jobs) each year.

- D. Trends in federal government hiring needs in recent years have included:
 - 1. Cybersecurity
 - 2. Privacy
 - 3. Information technology
 - 4. Election engineering
 - 5. Computer engineering
 - 6. Telecommunications
 - 7. International affairs
 - 8. Health care/public health

- E. High demand areas for this year include:
 - 1. Accounting/finance/budgeting
 - 2. Public Health
 - 3. Administration/management process
 - 4. Policy analysis
 - 5. International development/studies

JD’s in particular are in demand for regulatory agencies, to work as policy analysts or program analysts.

- F. Pay: Most PMFs with a Master’s Degree start at GS 9 pay grade, while those with a professional degree (a JD falls into this category) often start at GS 11 or 12, at the hiring agency’s discretion. Either way, in most PMF placements, the first year involves an accelerated promotion schedule. PMF salaries can end up as high as GS 13. To put things in perspective, here are the current GS scales (base plus locality increment) for Washington, DC:
 - 1. GS 9: \$59,534 - \$77,396
 - 2. GS 11: \$72,030 - \$93,638
 - 3. GS 13: \$102,663 – \$133,465

- G. Geographic location: While the majority of positions for PMFs are in Washington, DC, there are also positions elsewhere throughout the U.S. Positions abroad are exceedingly rare to non-existent, though depending on your position, there may be an opportunity to travel.