



SECURITY &
DEMOCRACY
FORUM

Getting a Job in Government – What They Don't Tell You

Insider Advice for Public Service Careers

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Course Objectives

- Demystify real hiring pathways for Hill, Executive Branch, and Intelligence Community (IC)
- Decode resumes, interviews, and clearances
- Compare different work environments in government
- Build a career strategy using mentorship, networking, and job sequencing

Why This Course Matters

- Government jobs are opaque by design—especially in national security
- Some of the best roles aren't posted
- Referrals, clearances, and timing matter as much as qualifications
- Better information = better strategy



USAJobs – What You Need to Know

- How it works: postings, filters, status updates
- When it works (e.g. State Dept, OPM roles) vs. when it doesn't
- Tips: keyword match, referral status, timing cycles
- Why people still get jobs outside USAJobs



Political Appointments & Fellowship Tracks

- Schedule A and C appointments: who gets them and how
- Key fellowships: PMF, Boren, AAAS, Presidential Innovation, etc.
- White House Liaison Offices (WHLO) and PPO
- Advantages and limits of political pathways



How People Get Hired on the Hill

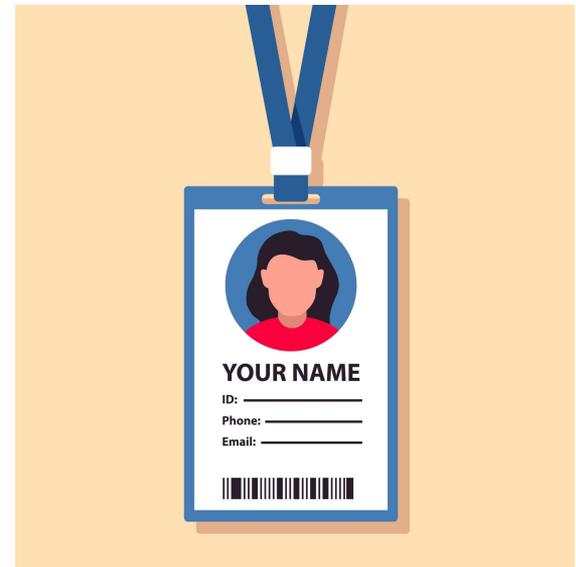
- Hill jobs listservs and referrals
- LC/LA/MLA distinctions
- Resumes are traded more than posted
- Speed matters: some jobs go from “opening” to “offer” in 48 hours

What It's Like to Work in...

- Personal Office: fast-paced, political, generalist
- Committee Staff: policy-focused, higher expertise, cross-Member
- Executive Branch: structured, bureaucratic, rule-based
- Intelligence Community: slow-moving, clearance-driven, high stakes

Contractors vs. Civil Servants

- Government-adjacent roles: FFRDCs, contractors, IPAs
- The “blended workforce” in defense/intel
- How to use contractor roles as a foot in the door
- Pros and cons (e.g. access vs. permanence)



Writing a Resume That Works

- 1 page for the Hill, 2–3 pages for federal
- Use active language, plain formatting
- Tailor experience to the job—not just the title
- Translate private/nonprofit/military roles into gov speak





The Security Clearance Process

- Clearance levels: Public Trust, Secret, TS/SCI, Poly
- How long it takes (and what to expect)
- Common disqualifiers and myths
- Interim clearances and workarounds



Interviews in Government

- Hill = vibe check + trust + “fit”
- Executive = structured, panel-style
- IC = behavioral, clearance-aware
- Always come with examples, always follow up professionally

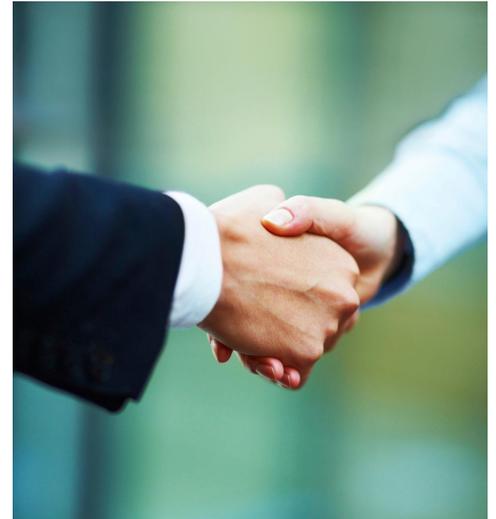
Mapping a Career in Public Service

- Think 2–3 jobs ahead: build a portfolio
- Lateral vs. upward moves
- Rotations, fellowships, and details as springboards
- Entry doesn't define trajectory—your reputation does



Networking Without Being Annoying

- How to ask for an informational interview
- What to say in your outreach (and what not to)
- Conferences, alumni networks, LinkedIn strategies
- Follow-up etiquette: polite persistence





Finding Mentorship

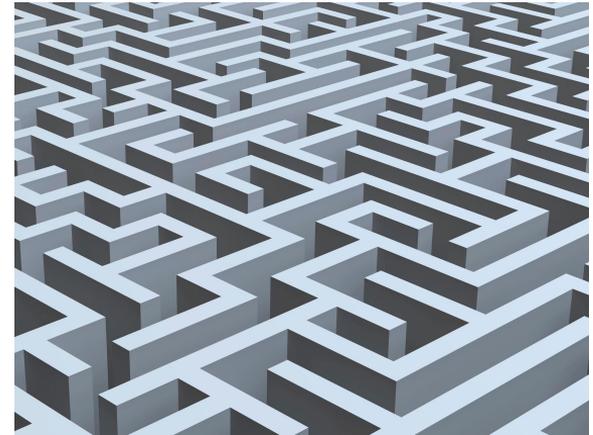
- Why mentors matter (especially in opaque institutions)
- How to ask for advice, not a job
- What good mentorship looks like
- Giving before asking: being useful to your network

Mistakes to Avoid

- Submitting a generic resume
- Over-sharing in a clearance interview
- Asking for a job on first contact
- Underestimating assistants or junior staff
- Thinking “the job posting is the whole story”

Key Takeaways

- Government hiring is a maze, not a ladder
- Relationships and reputation matter as much as skills
- Be strategic, persistent, and open to pivots
- There is no single path—only well-informed choices



Questions & Next Steps

- Open Q&A
- USAJobs, Hill job listservs, fellowship directories
- Sample resume templates
- WHLO and PPO guidance
- Invite to take other related modules (Intro to Intelligence, Economic Statecraft)