

The first language program that I participated in for Chinese was STARTALK at Hunter College.

My professor there recommended that I apply for the National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y).

I spent the last semester of my senior year studying abroad at a boarding school in Beijing, China.

While I was away on my gap semester in China,

I applied for the Hunter College Chinese Flagship Program

and I was accepted and that's where I went to college.

So I spent four years studying Chinese,

and the Flagship Program really supported me in making sure that

I had a really strong grasp of the language by the time that I left university.

I chose to work for the federal government

because I wanted opportunities where I could use both my language skills and my research skills.

My current position I actually found through an alumni of the Presidential Management Fellows Program

when I was looking for a job.

Ever since I participated in the STARTALK program at Hunter College for Mandarin Chinese,

it's always been something in the back of my mind

that it would be really fantastic to have a career in public service.

And as I continued my education, I was always thinking about the skills that I was acquiring

and how I might be able to apply those to a career in public service.

My field is essentially health communications.

So, we're always asking questions about the types of materials that we put out.

So I think as a language student, these are things that I was always thinking about

and as a health communications person, these are things that I continue to question throughout the day

when I'm looking at different materials.

Also, we do create materials in multiple languages,

so I have the opportunity to work on teams that are involved in translation as well.

I am reviewing and developing materials that go out to the American public about public health.

So I am working with a large team of people across the country of all different cultural backgrounds, incredibly diverse,

thinking about the types of public health materials that are going to resonate with different populations across our beautifully diverse country.

I work with heritage speakers of many different languages

and we work together as a team to come up with the public health messaging that's best going to resonate with the populations that they're working with.

Almost any government agency you might come to join works with people from across the country

who speak a variety of different languages,

so heritage language skills are always going to be an asset and are always going to come up

when we think about, as public servants, how we can serve best everybody in the United States.

What really surprised me coming into the government is how many opportunities are out there

that are just completely different in nature and how easy it is to move around.

So I've worked for an innovation lab,

I've worked in international development,

and now I'm working in public health.

I've been able to do trainings about how Congress works,

where I've actually gone there for a week.

I've been able to do developmental assignments where I do a different job for a month to gain new skills.

And I've also been able to work with people from across different government agencies,

learn a little bit more about what they're doing and what it takes to do their jobs,

and all of this has given me a really different perspective on my career and allowed me to grow.

I wake up every day as a public servant thinking about my job in terms of what I'm doing

and what I can do for people all across the country.

So in terms of my current job in public health,

thinking about making health information more accessible,

improving the ways in which researchers can do public health research,

thinking about the situations of people who might have different health conditions

that they need more information about and how I can contribute and help them with their situations are all things

that kind of go through my mind throughout the day of like, ways I can help through my job.

Through my role, I'm really thinking about all communities across the country and I'm specifically thinking about communities that might be underrepresented in research.

So for speakers of other languages,

I understand how important it is if they are given opportunities to be represented in medical studies.

I would advise any heritage language speaker who is interested in pursuing a federal government job

to make sure that you're understanding all of the different opportunities out there in federal government.

I see jobs that are looking for Chinese speakers all across the board.

So I would suggest just going into USAJOBS

in the keyword search, putting in the language that you speak and seeing what comes up

because there are just so many diverse opportunities across the government that I think you'd be surprised.