

Language Pathways

Checklist for Steps to a Federal Career

Your exact path to a federal career may vary. Be sure to ask a guidance counselor, academic advisor, career center, recruiter, commanding officer, or other local source for advice about your specific situation.

High school

- Study your language
 - Take classes and participate in language activities at your school
 - Take classes at a community-based language school
 - Enroll in summer language programs like STARTALK
 - Participate in a NSLI-Y program
 - Use language-learning apps
 - Engage with news and entertainment in the language
 - Listen to Episode 2 of the Language Pathways Podcast: “Developing Heritage Learner Skills for Government Careers” and Episode 6: “Language Learning, Volunteer, and Work Opportunities to Prepare for a Government Career”
 - Check out our Language Learning Guide for your language

- Get involved in the community
 - Engage in service-learning activities in your community
 - Participate in a community-based school, faith-based organization, or cultural group

- Consider college and military options
 - Research potential schools and their language programs, including language flagships
 - Do they teach your language? Is there a track for heritage learners?
 - Do they offer your language as a major, minor, or certificate track?
 - Are there placement tests or pre-/co-requisites?
 - Is there a foreign language proficiency requirement?
 - Look into study abroad programs
 - What schools have study abroad opportunities?
 - Will your major or program require you to study abroad?
 - Do programs abroad allow you to take courses in your language or are most courses taught in English?
 - Research military branches and specialties
 - Apply for private or federal scholarships
 - Apply for Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) programs and scholarships

- Explore careers and build job skills
 - Research careers of interest
 - Attend career fairs and networking events
 - Look for mentorship opportunities
 - Start building skills through part-time jobs

- Listen to Episode 9 of the Language Pathways Podcast: “Government Jobs that Use Language Skills”
- Obtain the Seal of Biliteracy
 - Check for guidelines in your school district
 - Talk to guidance counselors and language teachers about requirements
 - Apply to take qualifying language assessments
 - Listen to Episode 7 of the Language Pathways Podcast: “Testing and Demonstrating Proficiency in Heritage Languages”

College

- Take language classes
 - Assess your current proficiency levels in different skills
 - Set goals for the proficiency levels you want to reach
 - Meet with an academic advisor to plan your classes
 - Apply for scholarships and other funding opportunities
 - Listen to Episode 7 of the Language Pathways Podcast: “Testing and Demonstrating Proficiency in a Heritage Language”
- Build other skills
 - Choose a major or minor outside of your language
 - Look for and make connections between your studies and your language skills
 - Build soft skills like leadership and organization through volunteer service, clubs, sports, or student government
 - Participate in a Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) program or serve in the National Guard or a Reserve unit
 - Listen to Episode 9 of the Language Pathways Podcast: “Government Jobs that Use Language Skills”
- Gain work experience and training
 - Build skills through on-campus, part-time, and summer jobs
 - Take advantage of the resources at your school’s career center
 - Draft a resume and cover letters that highlight your language skills and work experience
 - Practice interviewing
 - Search for jobs and internships
 - Listen to Episode 6 of the Language Pathways Podcast: “Language Learning, Volunteer, and Work Opportunities to Prepare for a Government Career”
 - Take our “What federal job is right for me?” quiz
- Start networking
 - Talk to classmates, professors, and alumni with experience in your area of interest
 - Attend career fairs and networking events
 - Participate in informational interviews
 - Connect with professionals working in your area of interest on LinkedIn

- Add another profile in your language on LinkedIn
- Listen to Episode 8 of the Language Pathways Podcast: “Networking and Searching for Government Jobs”
- Immerse yourself in your language
 - Read, listen to, and watch news and media in the language
 - Join language-related clubs, student groups, or residential communities
 - Get involved and volunteer with local language communities and schools
 - Participate in study abroad and look for scholarships to help with funding
 - Enroll in U.S.-based summer language programs
 - Check out our Language Learning Guide for your language

Military

- Research branches and specialties
 - Think about your service, educational, and career goals
 - Look for specialties that use your language skills
 - Consider the language training options, benefits, and service commitments for different military branches and specialties
 - Meet with recruiters for branches of interest
 - Listen to Episode 9 of the Language Pathways Podcast: “Government Jobs that Use Language Skills”
- Enlist
 - Qualify for enlistment, including physical tests and the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)
 - Request to take the Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB) and/or Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT)
 - Determine Active Duty or Guard/Reserve Service and Military Occupational Specialty
 - Agree to training path and timeline
- Complete training
 - Complete basic training
 - Complete language training
 - Complete Military Occupational Specialty training
 - Report to Active Duty Base or return home for Guard/Reserve
- Use education benefits
 - Enroll in college benefits after meeting service requirements
 - Participate in a Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) program and apply for scholarships for domestic, overseas, or online language study through [Project GO](#)
 - Attend Officer Candidate School
 - Request to take the Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB) and/or Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT)
 - Complete specialized training including language training

- Continue service
 - Advance through military ranks
 - Learn additional languages or Military Occupational Specialties
 - Work with partner government agencies such as the CIA, NSA, or FBI
 - Volunteer for deployment or mission-specific work
 - Extend your service contract
 - Research reenlistment options in terms of training, location assignments, and bonuses

Federal career

- Research agencies and roles
 - Create a USAJOBS account to search for jobs and save them to your profile
 - Review security clearance requirements and prepare documentation
 - Search for additional job opportunities via agency-specific websites and [Intelligence Careers](#)
 - Listen to Episode 8 of the Language Pathways Podcast: “Networking and Searching for Government Jobs” and Episode 9: “Government Jobs that Use Language Skills”
- Write a federal resume
 - Make a list of your previous jobs
 - Describe your duties and responsibilities for each job
 - Quantify your job accomplishments using numbers, percentages, and other performance metrics
 - Reference key words from the job description
 - Use the resume builder on USAJOBS
 - Customize your resume for each job to which you apply
 - Ask a friend to proofread and provide feedback on your resume
 - Listen to Episode 10 of the Language Pathways Podcast: “Recruiting and Hiring Processes for Government Jobs”
- Practice interviewing
 - Think about how you have demonstrated the Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities in the job description
 - Ask a friend, mentor, or career counselor help you practice responding to interview questions
 - Research tips and prepare for speaking on camera for a video interview and participating in a recorded digital interview
- Look into related jobs
 - Research jobs at federal contractors that work with your agency of interest
 - Research related jobs in local or state governments, or with non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
 - Apply to jobs with similar job titles or required skills as your target federal job
 - Apply to other roles within your agency of interest if your desired role is not available

- Explore and consider applying to part-time and temporary jobs with your agency of interest or federal contractors
- Continue volunteering and providing service in the community