

## Language Pathways Guide: Connecting Heritage Learners to Federal Careers

### Part 1: Introduction

Welcome to the Language Pathways Guide! This guide is designed to support you as a language learner and future job seeker in using the series Language Pathways: Connecting Heritage Learners to Federal Careers. All materials in the series are brought to you by the Center for Applied Linguistics with funding from the National Security Agency.

This guide includes information about all of the resources in the Language Pathways series, anchored by our podcast covering key topics in language learning and pursuing federal government careers. Be sure to check out the questions for discussion and reflection for each podcast episode and our interactive quiz to explore which language learning scholarships may be right for you.

### Navigation

First, let's talk about how to navigate this guide. To navigate between the slides, you can click here: on the NEXT button, to see the next slide, and here: on the PREVIOUS button, to go back to the last slide.

At the bottom of each slide, you will also see the volume button to make the audio louder or quieter; the closed-captions button to turn on closed captions and read along with the audio; a seek bar; and a replay button.

You can click on the seek bar to control which part of the screen you want to see, and you can click on the replay button to replay the entire slide.

On the left, you can see the menu. You can click on any title to navigate to the slide you want to view. The menu also has a search bar that appears here after you click on the magnifying glass. You can search for a particular topic by typing in keywords.

On the top right, you can click here on the Resources button where you can find a transcript of the narrated audio for this guide.

### Goals

Now let's talk about the goals of this guide. In this guide, you will learn about:

- the different parts that make up the Language Pathways Series;
- topics, guests, and questions for discussion or reflection for each episode of the Language Pathways podcast; and
- how to use other resources in this series to envision and set goals for your own pathway to a federal career.

## Part 2: The Language Pathways Series

### Purpose

The goal of the Language Pathway Series is to help you leverage your language skills to get hired and work successfully in the federal government.

This project is part of the STARTALK initiative to increase learning of critical languages in order to build workforce capacity in the federal government to meet national security needs. The Center for Applied Linguistics developed a podcast and related resources to illuminate pathways for high school and college students to pursue opportunities to bring their in-demand language skills to the federal government and obtain a fulfilling career. Through this series, you can get advice from professionals who have experience with language learning and the federal government, including language teachers and administrators, specialists in language testing, career counselors, and people who have worked in many different federal jobs that use their language skills.

Although this series specifically highlights the strengths and experiences of heritage learners of Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Persian, and Russian, the information provided can help any language learner interested in federal career opportunities.

### Components

The Language Pathways Series features 12 episodes of the Language Pathways podcast. All episodes and transcripts are available on the project website, or you can listen and subscribe using your favorite podcast app. In the next part of this guide, we'll talk about the podcast episodes in detail.

Each of the 10 main episodes of the podcast is accompanied by a resource list that includes links to the organizations mentioned by our guests and other online resources we recommend related to the episode topic.

Our website also includes language learning guides for students of Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Persian, and Russian that list specific scholarship and language programs and links to learning materials to help practice and develop your language skills.

Finally, we offer three more ways to explore your potential pathways to a federal career using your language skills: a pathways graphic illustrating actions to take from high school, college, the military, or starting your search for a federal job; a checklist detailing steps in each pathway; and a sheet to establish and start monitoring progress towards your goals.

### Credit for completion

After you have listened to the Language Pathways podcast and reviewed the other resources on our project website, you can earn a digital badge to show what you've learned and share this

credential with your school or in your online profile. Follow instructions on the project website to request the Federal Career Pathfinder badge via email.

### Part 3: The Language Pathways Podcast

#### Podcast episodes

The Language Pathways podcast starts with an episode introducing your hosts from the Center for Applied Linguistics and the purpose of the podcast. We have ten episodes on different topics important to language learners who are interested in how they can prepare for a federal government job. The concluding episode offers a summary of the podcast series and highlights some of our favorite advice from guests.

Click on each episode title to learn more about the guests and specific topics covered, see some extra tips that didn't fit in the episode, and find questions to help you discuss or reflect individually on what you learned after listening.

#### 1. Skills and Abilities of Heritage Learners

In this 18-minute episode, our three guests from the language education organization ACTFL, a university program and community school for Persian, and a national organization for community heritage language schools and a community school for Chinese discuss the linguistic and cultural competencies of heritage language learners and how these skills and abilities can be helpful when working in the federal government.

One tip you won't hear in the episode is that heritage learners bring a lot of knowledge of real-life language use and cultural practices to the classroom that other second language learners or teachers with different language backgrounds may not have, so our guests encourage you to be aware of your expertise and share what you know!

The questions for discussion or reflection for this episode are:

1. What was the most interesting thing you heard in this episode?
2. What do you think is your biggest strength as a language learner?
3. How have you used your cultural knowledge to help in communication?

#### 2. Developing Heritage Learner Skills for Government Careers

In this 18-minute episode, our three guests from a federally-funded university center for heritage language research and resources, a national organization for community heritage language schools, and a university center for Asian studies discuss how heritage learners can work to develop and improve their language skills to use in federal government careers.

One tip you won't hear in the episode is that many heritage language learners know and use different dialects or varieties of a language without being aware of these differences, so our guests encourage you to ask members of your family or community more about the languages they know and where they learned them. They also suggest that a good way to learn vocabulary

for work settings is to search online for articles written by professionals using your language or videos featuring them speaking, select some of their sentence structures from these articles or videos, and practice using them.

The questions for discussion or reflection for this episode are:

1. What was the most interesting thing you heard in this episode?
2. What language skills do you want to grow?
3. What resources have you found useful to work on reading and writing?

### 3. Benefits of Government Careers

In this 18-minute episode, one guest who has used Korean working for the Defense Language Institute, Census Bureau, and Department of Homeland Security and another who uses Chinese for the Department of Justice discuss the personal and professional benefits of having a government career and how federal employees can help members of their language communities through their work.

One tip you won't hear in the episode is that many federal government agencies and contractors offer employees opportunities for training and moving between roles and topic areas, more than people often see in private sector jobs. Our guests also share that people hiring for government jobs highly value your previous work experience and how you describe the abilities that you have gained from jobs and education more than specific degrees or educational credentials.

The questions for discussion or reflection for this episode are:

1. What was the most interesting thing you heard in this episode?
2. What benefits of a government job interest you the most?
3. What concerns do you have about how you can support your community while working for the federal government?

### 4. Using Different Language Varieties and Dialects in Government Jobs

In this 20-minute episode, a Farsi instructor for the Defense Language Institute and an Arabic instructor for the Department of State's Foreign Service Institute discuss the value of using different language varieties, dialects, and registers when working in the federal government and their own experiences with language varieties at work.

One tip you won't hear in the episode is that beyond helping you obtain a government job, knowing a specific variety of a language means you already have a good foundation to learn another variety of that language.

The questions for discussion or reflection for this episode are:

1. What was the most interesting thing you heard in this episode?
2. What different language varieties or dialects are you familiar with?

3. How have you used a language variety or different level of formality in your language to help with communication?

#### 5. The Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) Scale

In this 18-minute episode, a program manager at the language education organization ACTFL and a course design specialist from the Department of State's Foreign Service Institute discuss how the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale is used to measure language proficiency across the federal government.

One tip you won't hear in the episode is that because the ILR scale measures proficiency in terms of language use and control including in more formal and professional settings, even people who might be considered native speakers of a language will not automatically demonstrate or test at a Level 5 in different skills. Our guests also note that government language testers are trained to consider all varieties and accents of a language as equal in order to mitigate unconscious bias in testing, and examinees should know they have a right to ask for a test review if they think that bias may have affected their assessment.

The questions for discussion or reflection for this episode are:

1. What was the most interesting thing you heard in this episode?
2. Why do you think it is important to talk about proficiency on a defined scale like the ILR?
3. How do you think your levels of proficiency vary across speaking, reading, listening, and writing?

#### 6. Language Learning, Volunteer, and Work Opportunities to Prepare for a Government Career

In this 18-minute episode, one guest who is applying as a speaker of Chinese for a Foreign Service Officer position in the Department of State, a guest who uses Russian in work for Customs and Border Protection, and one who has used Arabic with the Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services discuss their experience searching for jobs in the federal government and their recommendations for ways to prepare and demonstrate skills to obtain a federal career.

One tip you won't hear in the episode is to read through many different job descriptions and requirements in order to help narrow down what government jobs could be a good fit for you. Our guests also share that it can be easier to get hired in the federal government after you have already gotten a foot in the door of this work through a volunteer position, a contracting or part-time position, or government internship or scholarship.

The questions for discussion or reflection for this episode are:

1. What was the most interesting thing you heard in this episode?
2. What government scholarships and internships do you know about? Where can you go to learn more?
3. What do you think are the most effective ways to prepare for a government career?

### 7. Testing and Demonstrating Proficiency in a Heritage Language

In this 17-minute episode, our guests who are directors of a federally-funded university center for language assessment research and resources and of assessment and research at the language education organization ACTFL discuss what proficiency testing is and how it benefits language learners, how testing works in the federal government, and demonstrating proficiency through the Seal of Biliteracy.

One tip you won't hear in the episode is to read your test score reports closely to understand the scale being used and what your test scores show about what you know and can improve. Our guests also recommend that if your school does not provide much information about obtaining the Seal of Biliteracy, you should share what you know about the Seal with your siblings, friends, and other students who speak languages other than English so that they can be aware of this opportunity.

The questions for discussion or reflection for this episode are:

1. What was the most interesting thing you heard in this episode?
2. How do you assess your own language skills?
3. What is your experience with proficiency testing? What did you learn from your test results?

### 8. Networking and Searching for Government Jobs

In this 20-minute episode, one guest who is a sociolinguist and career management specialist for university students, one guest who uses Korean working for the Department of Defense, one guest who uses Arabic with the Centers for Disease Control and as a director with the National Security Education Program (NSEP) Alumni Association, and one who uses Arabic as a contractor with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) discuss ways to take advantage of networking opportunities and effectively search for federal government jobs.

One tip you won't hear in the episode is for all students and job seekers to make a LinkedIn profile and follow guidance you can find online about best practices to select your photo, write a profile headline, and highlight your work accomplishments. Our guests also suggest that when you first start searching for a government job that can use your language skills, you look into opportunities at consulting firms that provide government language services in addition to checking for full-time jobs at government agencies.

The questions for discussion or reflection for this episode are:

1. What was the most interesting thing you heard in this episode?
2. Who are some people you can contact to network for government jobs?
3. What keywords would be helpful to use when searching for government jobs?

### 9. Government Jobs that Use Language Skills

In this 23-minute episode, one guest who works as a Chinese language analyst for the Department of Justice and four military officers who work with linguists in the Army National Guard discuss varied roles in the federal government and the military that use language skills.

One tip you won't hear in the episode is for language analysts to build their skills and readiness for work tasks by reading news reports and social media postings which helps to stay current on events and language use. Our guests also share that members of the military with language skills and training can contribute greatly not just to defense operations abroad but also to work with U.S. allies and humanitarian missions by using their language and cultural knowledge to engage with and understand the needs of local people.

The questions for discussion or reflection for this episode are:

1. What was the most interesting thing you heard in this episode?
2. How do you want to use your language skills to help people in the United States or abroad?
3. What are different types of jobs and agencies where you could use your language skills?

### 10. Recruiting and Hiring Processes for Government Jobs

In this 21-minute episode, two guests from university career centers and one who teaches mid-career professionals pursuing federal government jobs through the English for Heritage Language Speakers (EHLS) Program discuss best practices for preparing for hiring processes for government jobs, including building a federal resume, interviewing, and obtaining a security clearance.

One tip you won't hear in the episode is for job seekers to read position descriptions closely because even when job listings do not name your specific degree or major, they may still be a good match for the skills that you have. Our guests also want students to be aware that federal jobs requiring security clearances will consider your credit card debt, use of prohibited drugs and misuse of prescription drugs, and other things like underage drinking and illegal downloading. Although specific activities may not block your federal employment, they recommend that you try to stop any problem habits and be thorough and honest in completing clearance forms.

The questions for discussion or reflection for this episode are:

1. What was the most interesting thing you heard in this episode?
2. How can your school's guidance office or career center help you prepare and search for jobs?
3. What is your experience with practice or real job interviews? What did you learn from them?

## Part 4: Resources to Build to a Federal Career

### Other resources in this series

In addition to the podcast episodes, there are many other resources in the Language Pathways Series that you can use to start planning and taking steps towards a federal government career that uses your language skills.

Click on each icon to learn more about how to use these resources.

To learn about the topics, organizations, and government agencies referenced by our podcast guests, check out our resource lists for each episode.

To explore opportunities to study and build your language skills, read our 2-page language learning guides for Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Persian, and Russian.

To envision your potential pathway to a government career, view our language pathways graphic.

To review specific next steps you may take based on where you are in your pathway, use our checklist for steps to a federal career.

To start planning your goals and action items for each goal, check out our goal setting sheet.

### Pathways to a federal career

There are many different paths to take to a federal career where you can use your language skills. No matter where you are on your language learning journey, you can start thinking about next steps now. On the following slides, you can learn about recommended steps starting in high school, starting in or continuing to the military or college, and when you are ready to search for a federal job.

Be sure to talk to a guidance counselor, academic advisor, career counselor, recruiter or commanding officer, or another person who can help give you advice for your specific situation.

### Steps to a federal career: High school

Click on each section of the circle to learn more about steps to take towards a federal career for students in 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 your language.
- Listen to podcast Episode 2: “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.

#### 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 podcast Episode 7: “Testing and Demonstrating Proficiency in Heritage Languages”.

#### 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.

#### 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 podcast Episode 9: “Government Jobs that Use Language Skills”.

#### Consider college and the military

- Research potential schools and their language programs, including Language Flagships. Think about the following questions to choose a school that fits your needs:
  - 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. Think about the following questions to choose a program that fits your needs:
  - 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.

### [Steps to a federal career: Military](#)

Click on each section of the circle to learn more about steps to take towards a federal career through military service.

#### [Research branches and specialties](#)

- Think about your goals for your military service, education, and career.
- 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 podcast Episode 9: "Government Jobs that Use Language Skills".

#### [Enlist](#)

- Qualify for enlistment, including completing 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 your Active Duty Base or return home for Guard/Reserve.

#### [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.
- If you have already separated from the military and wish to return, research reenlistment options in terms of training, location assignments, and bonuses.

#### [Use education benefits](#)

- Enroll in college and use education 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.

### Steps to a federal career: College

Click on each section of the circle to learn more about steps to take towards a federal career for students in 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 podcast Episode 7: "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 in other areas 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 podcast Episode 9: Government Jobs that Use Language Skills.

#### 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 podcast Episode 8: "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.

#### 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 podcast Episode 6: "Language Learning, Volunteer, and Work Opportunities to Prepare for a Government Career".

#### Federal career

Click on each section of the circle to learn more about steps to take towards a federal career when you are ready to start your job search.

#### 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 podcast Episode 8: "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 podcast Episode 10: "Recruiting and Hiring Processes for Government Jobs".

#### Look for related jobs

- Research jobs at federal contractors that work with your agency of interest.

- Research related jobs in local or state governments and with non-governmental organizations.
- 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.

#### Practice interviewing

- Plan for and discuss how you have demonstrated all of the Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities in the job description.
- Ask a friend, mentor, or career counselor to 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.

#### Interactive quiz: What language scholarship is right for me?

There are many different federally-funded scholarships available for U.S. citizens and nationals to fund your language learning. Answer the following questions to find out which language learning scholarships may be right for you based on your eligibility and preferences. Be sure to click the Submit button to record each of your answers. After you see your results, click Retake Quiz if you would like to change and resubmit your answers and see new results.

Note that specific schools and other private sources may offer scholarships to support language study, including for students who do not have U.S. citizenship, so be sure to check those out, too.

1. What kind of student are you?
2. What is your language? Select one.
3. How many years have you studied the language?
4. How do you want to study your language?
5. How long would you like the program to be?
6. Do you prefer to find your own program or participate in an existing program designated by the scholarship? Select one.
7. Do you prefer language study to be the focus of your program or one component of the program? Select one.

#### Results

Click on the buttons below to learn more about the top three federally-funded scholarships you may wish to apply for. To help choose between different scholarships and language programs, you can look into specific program benefits and covered costs, housing type, local climate, what

a typical day looks like, and other things to consider that would make your study more comfortable and enjoyable. Students participating or interested in a Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program should also explore scholarships for domestic and overseas critical language study through [Project GO](#).

[Click here to retake the quiz.](#)

[Click here to see descriptions of all scholarships.](#)

## Part 5: Conclusion

### Summary

You have now come to the end of the Language Pathways Guide. Let's summarize what this guide covered. You have learned about the objectives and features of the Language Pathways Series and the different episodes of the Language Pathways podcast. You also explored different pathways and steps to take towards a federal career.

### Checkpoint: Show what you know

Answer the following questions to show what you have learned in this guide. For each question, click Submit to check your answer against the expected response.

1. What is the goal of the Language Pathways Series?
2. Match the description to each part of the Language Pathways Series.
3. Which of the following broad topics does the podcast cover? Select all that apply.
4. Mark the following statements as true or false.

### Thank you!

Thank you for working through this guide to learn more about the Language Pathways Series. We invite you to listen to the Language Pathways podcast and review the episode resource lists, check out the learning guide for your language, and access all of our Language Pathways Series resources for planning your next steps to a federal government career. Be sure to also check out the Career Opportunities video series and interactive guide and remember to request your digital badge to recognize and share your achievement in connecting your language learning to federal careers.