# Frequently Asked Questions for NASA's Restoring Core Competencies Hiring Initiative

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The following questions and answers apply to hiring opportunities, as part of NASA's Restoring Core Competencies hiring initiative. Hover over the question in Contents and Ctrl+Click to jump to the answers.

## Contents


General ..... 2
Why is NASA focused on restoring core competencies? ..... 2
How is NASA making decisions about what positions will be insourced? ..... 2
What is the timeline of these hiring actions? ..... 2
Eligibility for Positions ..... 2
Who can apply? ..... 2
Which announcements should I apply to? ..... 2
What are the degree and specialized experience requirements for positions? ..... 3
If I don't have the specific degree you are looking for, but I have years of experience, will that be considered? ..... 3
What are the differences in job series (ex: 801, 2210, 1640, 301, 343)? ..... 3
Can I perform the work in this position remotely vs. on-site? ..... 3
Application Process ..... 3
How will the application process work? ..... 3
What can I do now to prepare my application? ..... 3
How should I write my resume? ..... 4
Do I need to provide a transcript with my application? ..... 4
Are letters of recommendation required? ..... 4
What is the duration of the application windows? ..... 4
Selection Process ..... 4
What happens after the closing date of the announcement? ..... 4
Will there be interviews? ..... 4
When will I be notified if I'm selected or not selected? ..... 4
Pay, Compensation and Benefits ..... 4
How is salary determined? ..... 4
How will my current salary be considered? ..... 5
Will I start at 'step 1' of the position grade level (e.g., GS-13, step 1)? ..... 5
Is salary negotiable? ..... 5
Is my start date negotiable? ..... 5
What will my leave accrual rate be if I'm selected? ..... 5
What is included in a Federal Compensation Package? ..... 5

How does retirement and the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) work? ..... 5
How does health insurance and paid parental leave work for civil servants? ..... 6
Onboarding ..... 6
Do I get to keep my laptop? ..... 6
Where would I begin work if selected? ..... 6
Pathways, Current Terms and Internships ..... 6
Can current civil servants on a term appointment apply for a higher grade or are they only considered for their current grade level? ..... 6
Is the Pathways interns conversion process changing? ..... 6
Are other internships impacted by this directive? ..... 6

## General

**Why is NASA focused on restoring core competencies?**
By bringing core technical and operational work back into the civil service, NASA will strengthen its technical authority and streamline execution to ensure we have the internal agility to address the complex mission challenges ahead.

**How is NASA making decisions about what positions will be insourced?**
Organizations are identifying outsourced or missing core competencies. Once assessments are complete, a phased transition strategy is prepared. Organizations then work through the careful process of identifying which specific contract positions will be insourced and establish the application process. Appropriate notifications are then made to contract management and to impacted organizations.

**What is the timeline of these hiring actions?**
The Administrator's Directive was issued on Feb. 6 and kicked off a number of actions. Exact timelines for job postings and transitions will vary by center and by contract to ensure mission stability. Official communications regarding timelines and specific postings are shared as details are finalized.

## Eligibility for Positions

**Who can apply?**
All postings are open to the public. Current civil servants (permanent or term) may also apply to any positions for which they meet qualifications. Contractors are not automatically converted; NASA is transitioning positions, not people, so individuals must apply and be selected through this competitive process.

**Which announcements should I apply to?**
Applicants can and should apply to all positions they believe they qualify for. Announcements may cover multiple job series and General Schedule (GS) levels, and individual announcements may be used to make multiple selections.

**What are the degree and specialized experience requirements for positions?**
All announcements outline degree and experience requirements within the USAJOBS vacancy. In order to qualify for a grade level, resumes must demonstrate one year of specialized experience at the next lower grade.

**If I don't have the specific degree you are looking for, but I have years of experience, will that be considered?**
Consistent with OPM qualification standards and the Merit Hiring Plan's emphasis on experience, we are prioritizing experience over education, and applicants are referred based on the quality and relevance of their experience. Where a candidate is selected and the basic education requirement is not met, we work with subject matter experts to document whether the candidate's exceptional experience satisfies the applicable OPM provision.

**What are the differences in job series (ex: 801, 2210, 1640, 301, 343)?**
Each series has distinct qualification standards, and announcements are series-specific. Refer to the Qualifications and Education sections of the announcement for the position's specific qualification requirements. Apply to the series that best aligns to your education and experience; if unsure, apply to multiple openings.

**Can I perform the work in this position remotely vs. on-site?**
Jobs will be on-site at the center where duties are performed unless specifically designated as remote positions on the USAJOBS announcement.

## Application Process

**How will the application process work?**
All applications will be received through vacancies posted to USAJOBS. To apply, you will set up or access your USAJOBS profile. You may then build or upload a two-page resume and start the application process. You may be asked to upload required documents (as applicable) by following the prompts in USAJOBS. You will also answer a few questions related to your education and experience.

**What can I do now to prepare my application?**
Candidates are encouraged to start reviewing USAJOBS resume resources and information. Resources can be found on NASA's How To Apply website. This information will provide insight into how you can best prepare your application package. It can even be helpful to review existing job announcements to get familiar with how USAJOBS announcements are structured; please note that job announcement specifics can vary from position to position.

**How should I write my resume?**
All resumes submitted through USAJOBS must be two pages or fewer. Resumes longer than two pages will be rejected by the USAJOBS system. Applicants should focus on highlighting experience and qualifications that match the specialized experience listed in the job announcement. Include job titles, employment dates (month and year), and a brief description of key duties and accomplishments for each role. Tailoring is encouraged and applicants may submit different resumes for different postings.

**Do I need to provide a transcript with my application?**
For positions that require a transcript, candidates can submit unofficial transcripts at time of application. Official transcripts are required after a job offer. Including all conferred degrees is advised.

**Are letters of recommendation required?**
Letters of recommendation are not required.

**What is the duration of the application windows?**
Application windows vary. The application deadline is stated on each USAJOBS vacancy posting.

## Selection Process

**What happens after the closing date of the announcement?**
Candidates will receive an initial confirmation email that their application has been received. NASA staffing specialists review resumes for minimum qualifications (including transcript review for degree-required positions) before forwarding applicants to the subject matter expert (SME) review of the Written Interview responses. All candidates receive a fair, consistent review.

**Will there be interviews?**
Some positions may require in-person interviews.

**When will I be notified if I'm selected or not selected?**
Once qualifications determinations have been finalized, candidates will receive a notification regarding whether their application has been referred to the hiring manager.

## Pay, Compensation and Benefits

**How is salary determined?**
NASA is committed to treating employees fairly throughout this transition and we apply a thorough and consistent approach to compensation, with the goal of aligning pay as closely as possible to that of current NASA employees and other hires in similar roles with comparable qualifications. This will include factors such as: relevant experience, skills,

and qualifications; the responsibilities and requirements of the position; pay of current employees and recent hires in similar roles; and current labor data.

**How will my current salary be considered?**
NASA's pay strategy for first federal appointments is guided by the Office of Personnel Management's Advancing Pay Equity in Governmentwide Pay Systems (Federal Register 89 FR 5737) and the requirements of 5 CFR § 531. In accordance with this guidance, non-federal salary and pay history are not considered when determining initial pay. This approach ensures pay equity for new hires and maintains consistency with the compensation of current staff in comparable positions, while allowing for the use of applicable pay incentives when warranted.

**Will I start at 'step 1' of the position grade level (e.g., GS-13, step 1)?**
Advanced steps may be offered based on relevant experience.

**Is salary negotiable?**
The salary offered to candidates is based on the position grade and step. The position grade is not negotiable. An advanced step may be offered based on relevant experience. The salary will be provided with tentative job offers. Upon receipt of the tentative job offer, candidates must be prepared to accept or decline the offer within 3 days.

**Is my start date negotiable?**
Although specific starts dates are targeted for each hiring announcement phase, exact start dates may be adjusted as needed to support new employee transitions.

**What will my leave accrual rate be if I'm selected?**
Enhanced leave accrual may be offered based on years of relevant experience. Contractor paid time off (PTO)/comp time/sick leave are company-specific and do not transfer – consult your contractor employer. NASA benefits information is available at https://www.nasa.gov/careers/life-at-nasa/.

**Am I eligible for advanced annual leave?**
In addition to earned annual leave, permanent employees are credited at the beginning of each leave year or upon hire with annual leave that they are expected to accrue during the leave year.

**What is included in the Federal Compensation Package?**
A Federal position offers a range of compensation benefits that extends beyond the salary. For a full list and more information, visit OPM's Federal Employee Compensation Package page [link: https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-

oversight/pay-leave/pay-administration/fact-sheets/federal-employee-compensation-package].

**How does retirement and the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) work?**
Retirement service date typically begins at onboarding; eligibility depends on additional factors beyond the appointment date. Prior contractor/military/industry experience does not convert 1:1 to federal retirement service. Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) participation applies, and applicants can consult OPM's retirement center for details; TSP vesting follows standard federal rules.

**How does health insurance and paid parental leave work for civil servants?**
Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) start timing depends on appointment processing (no specific lag given in the export). Paid Parental Leave is up to 12 weeks for eligible federal employees after 12 months of service; refer to official OPM guidance for specifics.

## Onboarding

**Do I get to keep my laptop?**
The Office of the Chief Information Officer is working to enable new civil servant employees to use existing government IT equipment if available.

**Where would I begin work if selected?**
Onboarding will be done in person at the NASA center where the vacancy is advertised. Start date and logistics are finalized after a tentative offer.

## Pathways, Current Terms and Internships

**Can current civil servants on a term appointment apply for a higher grade or are they only considered for their current grade level?**
An applicant can apply to any announcement for which they feel qualified. It is recommended that term employees also apply to an announcement that matches their current grade and series to not limit the opportunity for conversion.

**Is the Pathways interns conversion process changing?**
The Pathways Internship Program is separate from this initiative; conversions continue per program policies and schedules. Current Pathways interns may apply to these
announcements.

**Are other internships impacted by this directive?**
Contractor internships are managed by contractor companies and fall outside this directive. NASA expects continued/expanded Pathways/OSTEM internship programs; interns should monitor NASA internship resources for postings.