

USDA Pathways Program Handbook



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1 – INTRODUCTION

A vibrant internship program is among the most essential efforts in maintaining a diverse and talented workforce. Moreover, an internship program that encompasses a collaborative approach fosters workforce planning, cooperation, and knowledge sharing. Hence, all USDA Agencies and Staff Offices will work in partnership to recruit, hire, and retain a diverse and talented workforce. To reach this goal, USDA will implement the USDA Pathways Programs with the goal of ensuring cross-agency communications, providing meaningful experiences and performance feedback, establishing accountability and oversight, and promoting career and professional development.

Moving forward under the umbrella of OneUSDA, we acknowledge and thank the Forest Service and all those who contributed to the development of this handbook.

2 – PURPOSE

1. On July 10, 2012, Pathways regulations became effective. This Handbook provides direction on the USDA Pathways Programs, which consist of:

- a. Internship Program,
- b. Recent Graduates Program, and
- c. Presidential Management Fellows (PMFs) Program.

2. The USDA **Internship Program** has replaced the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) and the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP). The USDA Internship Program is designed to provide Federal employment experience for students who are in high school, in a home-school program, rehabilitation or vocation school, 1-year full-time certificate program, or in an undergraduate or graduate school program. The USDA **Recent Graduates Program** is designed to provide Federal career experience for individuals who have recently graduated from a qualifying associates, bachelors, master's, professional, doctorate, vocational or technical degree or certificate from a qualifying educational institution, within the previous 2 years or a veteran, as defined in 5 U.S.C. 2108, who, due to a military service obligation, was precluded from applying to the Recent Graduates Program during any portion of the 2-year eligibility period, shall have a full 2-year period of eligibility upon his or her release or discharge from active duty. In no event, however, may the individual's eligibility period extend beyond 6 years from the date on which the individual completed the requirements of an academic course of study. The **Presidential Management Fellows (PMFs) Program** is designed to grant Federal work experience for individuals who have recently graduated from a degree seeking institution for no more than 2-years and who hold advanced degrees (law degree, Ph.D., medical degree). Each program identifies a targeted audience and encompasses a systematic training program, a meaningful work experience, performance feedback, an Individual Development Plan (IDP), a mentoring experience, and on-boarding and orientation activities.

3. The Executive Order on the Pathways Programs also created a Schedule D Hiring Authority. The Schedule D Hiring Authority grants agencies the authority to recruit students and

recent graduates to excepted service positions. Upon completion of program requirements, supervisors may convert USDA Pathways participants to career-conditional appointments.

4. The Pathways Programs are limited in nature and intended to provide USDA a supplemental authority to use as part of an overall workforce planning strategy. These programs should be utilized as in a limited way as part of an overall strategic plan.

5. All USDA Scholarship programs that include opportunities for participants to have an internship position must be publicly announced via USAJOBS and filled in compliance with Pathways and excepted service employment regulations. Recruiting must target agricultural and biological sciences as well as other USDA mission related academic fields of study regardless of the academic institution the applicant attends. Recruiters and those who are not Human Resources (HR) Operations staff involved in staffing these scholarship/internship positions must not accept resumes/applications from students nor have any role in the evaluation or selection of candidates. Scholarship program offices must work with their HR Operations staff to comply with regulations at 5 CFR 362 and 302 and adhere to procedures outlined herein to fill all scholarship/internship positions. Refer to the Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA) Desk Aids, "What to Expect Next" to obtain required language to use when advertising all internship/scholarship positions.

6. This Handbook establishes procedures and responsibilities for referral, selection, and/or placement actions under the Pathways Programs.

3 – AUTHORITIES

5 CFR Part 362	Pathways Programs
5 CFR 213.3402(a)(b)(c)	Excepted Service, Schedule D, Pathways Programs
5 CFR 250.102	Delegated Authorities
Executive Order 13562	Recruiting and Hiring Students and Recent Graduates
5 CFR Part 302	Employment in the Excepted Service
5 CFR Part 610	Hours of Duty
5 CFR Part 430	Performance Management
5 CFR Part 890	Federal Employee Health Benefits Program
5 CFR Part 531	Pay Administration

4 – OBJECTIVES

1. All USDA Agencies and Staff Offices will work in partnership to recruit, hire, and retain a diverse and talented workforce. To reach this goal, USDA will implement the USDA Pathways Programs with the goal of ensuring cross-agency communications, providing meaningful experiences and performance feedback, establishing accountability and oversight, and promoting career and professional development.

2. To provide for maximum flexibility and opportunities for USDA to hire students and recent graduates and provide them with practical work experience and training.

3. To meet employment needs of both the agency and Pathways participants and to assist USDA in its progress towards a workforce representative of the nation's diversity.

4. To provide an internship program that encompasses a collaborative approach that fosters workforce planning, cooperation, and knowledge sharing.

5 – POLICY

1. Comply with Office of Personnel Management (OPM) regulations and other requirements regarding Interns, Recent Graduates and Presidential Management Fellows employment; ensure the equitable treatment of Pathways Programs participants; and ensure that appointment authorities are used appropriately.

2. Ensure that the Pathways Programs employment applicant pool reflects the nation's diversity.

6 – ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 – Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM)

- Execute an MOU with OPM for the administration and use of the USDA Pathways Programs, according to the provisions of the merit system principles specified in 5 CFR 362;
- Maintain oversight of the USDA Pathways Programs, including collecting data for the Human Capital Report;
- Provide information to OPM regarding the job opportunities which fall under the USDA Pathways Programs;
- Provide leadership and policy guidance;
- Delegate authority to the USDA Pathways Programs Officer to oversee and monitor the management of the Program; and
- Ensure the Mission Area/Agency Human Resources Directors (MAHRDs) conduct periodic reviews to measure the quality and effectiveness of the program

6.2 – The Provost, Virtual University

- Provide USDA Pathways participants with career and professional development training using USDA's AgLearn Learning Management System; and
- Train HR Professionals, Hiring Managers, Recruiters, and Student Coordinators in USDA's Pathways Programs best practices.

6.3 – USDA Pathways Programs Officer

The USDA Pathways Programs Officer is responsible for providing the overall management and administration of the USDA Pathways Programs and serving as liaison between OPM and Mission Area Human Resources Directors (MAHRD's) by providing both parties with implementation updates, clarifying technical and programmatic issues, and best practices. The USDA Pathways Programs Officer is responsible for:

- Serving as a liaison between OPM and Mission Area/Agency Human Resources Directors by providing both parties with implementation updates, clarifying technical and programmatic issues, and best practices;
- Approving/Disapproving Breaks in Program;
- Monitoring the management of the USDA Pathways Programs;
- Periodically evaluating the implementation of the USDA Pathways Programs and make changes as needed; and
- Attending related training as applicable.

6.4 – Mission Area Human Resources Directors (MAHRD)

- Comply with the USDA Pathways Programs requirements, as described in the OPM-USDA MOU, USDA Departmental Regulation (DR) on Pathways Program and this Handbook;
- Provide OHRM with Pathways Programs data in an effort to ensure Program compliance;
- Ensure compliance in the implementation of the Program;
- Ensure Program objectives are met by line managers and staff in their areas of responsibility;
- Ensure opportunities are consistent with positions identified in recruitment plans or other appropriate Mission Area/Agency plans;
- Ensure USDA Pathways participants meet OPM qualifications and educational standards and that veterans' preference laws are complied with;
- Notify the USDA Presidential Management Fellows (PMFs) Coordinator 30-days prior to a PMF appointment;
- Ensure Agencies and Staff Offices are financially able to support the requirements of the program beyond salary and benefits, including:
 - OPM fee for PMFs;
 - Training;
 - Travel;
 - Developmental rotation(s); and
 - Other related expenses.

- Ensure USDA Agency and Staff Office supervisors, who wish to hire a PMF, must receive the approval of the first level SES in his/her Agency chain of command;
- Approving/Disapproving of Extension Requests
- Ensure that USDA Agencies and Staff Offices evaluate the value and effectiveness of their PMF Programs and provide a copy of the evaluation to the USDA Virtual University Provost on September 1 of each year;
- Agencies and Staff Offices will provide orientation, assign mentors within 90 days of appointment, provide a rotational experience, establish an Individual Development Plan (IDP) within 45 days of appointment, and provide students and recent graduates with a minimum of 40 hours of formal, interactive training per year, and 80 hours of training per year, for 2 years, for PMFs, as outlined in the USDA Pathways Programs Training and Development Plan. See section 11, [Exhibit 11](#) (Interns), [Exhibit 12](#) (Recent Graduates) and [Exhibit 13](#) (PMFs).

6.5 – Recruiters

- Ensure all vacancies are publicly posted in accordance with 5 CFR 362.203;
- Ensure attendance at recruitment events/job fairs is publicly posted if Pathways opportunities are available;
- Refrain from collecting applications/resumes from prospective interns at any and all career and recruitment fairs/events;
- Ensure all internships opportunities are posted publicly before attending a recruitment or job fair;
- Recruit from a diverse student population, in accordance with USDA's recruitment plans;
- Maintain records of recruitment sources;
- Participate in periodic USDA Pathways Programs training;
- Refer students to Student Coordinators; and
- Understand and adhere to USDA's Pathways Programs recruitment plans and policies.

6.6 – Student Coordinators

- Keep abreast of Mission Area/ Pathways Programs vacancies;

- Participate in Mission Area/Agency recruitment plan development to ensure Pathways Programs goals are properly established;
- Ensure supervisors identify training and educational needs which will allow interns to develop the competencies appropriate to the Mission Area/Agency;
- Ensure all USDA Pathways Programs vacancies are posted;
- Acknowledge receipt of Break In the Program and Extension Requests;
- Ensure each Pathways Participant receives Orientation and On-boarding training;
- Participate in periodic USDA Pathways Programs training;
- Monitor Pathways Programs participant's progress, maintain records and copies of approved extension requests forms, organize and analyze statistical data required for program review, administration, and evaluation.

6.7 – Managers and Supervisors

- Work effectively with all USDA Pathways participants;
- Authorize meetings between Pathways participants to provide performance feedback
- Ensure each Pathways participant receives orientation and On-boarding training;
- Encourage their experienced employees to serve as mentors;
- Ensure Pathways participant's develop an IDP;
- Ensure the completion of the USDA Pathways Programs Training Plan;
- Ensure each USDA Pathways participant signs a USDA Pathways Programs Participant Agreement;
- Participate in periodic USDA Pathways Programs training;
- Coordinate and support a 4-6 month rotational assignment for PMF's;
- Complete a performance management plan for all USDA Pathways participants; and

- Submit Break in Program and Extension Requests timely;

6.8 – Human Resources Practitioners

- Apply applicable Veterans Preference rules to all applicants;
- Adjudicate the applicant’s suitability and verify his or her qualifications;
- Work directly with the participants of the USDA Pathways Programs to offer assistance with HR services,
- Ensure each Pathways participant receives orientation and On-boarding training;
- Implement the Agency’s USDA Pathways Programs in a fair and equal environment
- Ensure each Pathways participant signs a USDA Pathways Programs Participant Agreement;
- Acknowledge, sign, and date Break In the Program and Extension Requests Forms as needed;
- Keep accurate records of the Agency’s Break in Program and Extension Requests;
- Participate in periodic USDA Pathways Programs training;
- Publically post all internship job opportunities, as outlined in 5 CFR 362.203;
- Use the Schedule D hiring authority when hiring USDA Pathways Interns, Recent Graduates and PMFs;
- Ensure applicants for intern positions meet and maintain the definition of a student, as specified in 5 CFR 362.202; and
- Ensure compliance with applicable negotiated agreements regarding the Pathways program and program participants.

6.9 – The Executive Resources Board (ERB)

- Review current and proposed Presidential Management Fellow (PMF) policies for adequacy;

- Ensure USDA PMF provisions are consistent with the Department’s mission and strategic planning objectives, priorities and goals established by the Secretary and law;
- Review and approve or disapprove agency requests for extension of a PMF’s appointment and PMF conversions. Review current and proposed PMF policies for adequacy;

6.10 – Mentors

- Assist USDA Pathways participants in identifying, developing, and implementing mentoring goals;
- Provide a network for the USDA Pathways participant in accessing career guidance and growth opportunities;
- Meet regularly, in person or by telephone for the established time;
- Provide constructive feedback ;
- Recognize and validate signs of professional growth and development in the protégé;
- Advise on relevant training needs and opportunities; and
- Share knowledge and insights and create opportunities for professional exposure

6.11 – Civil Rights Office

The Civil Rights Office will assist supervisors and managers with outreach activities, in accordance with the USDA DR on Pathways Programs and this Handbook.

7 – DEFINITIONS

Executive Resources Board (ERB): Has the same meaning as specified in 5 CFR 317.501(a); in those agencies that are not required to have an ERB pursuant to that section, it means the senior agency official or officials who have been given responsibility for executive resources management and oversight by the agency head.

Certificate Program: Defined, in 5 CFR 362.102, to mean “postsecondary education, in a qualifying educational institution, equivalent to at least 1 academic year of full-time study that is part of an accredited college-level, technical, trade, vocational, or business school curriculum.” The 1 year pertains to the curriculum in terms of credit hours. For most schools running on a semester schedule, a minimum coursework load runs between 24 to 30+ credit hours.

Qualifying Educational Institution means: (1) A high school whose curriculum has been approved by a State or local governing body, or a home-school curriculum that has been approved by such a body or a State; and (2) Any of the following educational institutions or curricula that have been accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education: (i) A technical or vocational school; (ii) A 2-year or 4-year college or university; (iii) A graduate or professional school (e.g., law school, medical school); or (iv) A home-school curriculum.

Internship Program: Is for current diploma/certificate/degree-seeking students. It consolidates provisions of the Student Educational Employment Program (SEEP) into a new student internship program designed to provide high school, vocational and technical, undergraduate, and graduate students opportunities to be exposed to the work of Government through Federal internships. This program is designed to attract the interest of students enrolled in a wide variety of educational institutions, with paid opportunities to work in USDA and explore Federal careers while still in school.

Recent Graduates Program: Is designed to provide Federal career experience for individuals who have recently graduated from a qualifying associates, bachelors, master's, professional, doctorate, vocational or technical degree or certificate from a qualifying educational institution, within the previous 2 years or A veteran, as defined in 5 U.S.C. 2108, who, due to a military service obligation, was precluded from applying to the Recent Graduates Program during any portion of the 2-year eligibility period, shall have a full 2-year period of eligibility upon his or her release or discharge from active duty. In no event, however, may the individual's eligibility period extend beyond 6 years from the date on which the individual completed the requirements of an academic course of study.

Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program: Has been the Federal Government's premier leadership development program for advanced degree candidates. Executive Order 13562 expands the eligibility window for applicants, making it more “student friendly” by aligning it with academic calendars and including those who have received a qualifying advanced degree within the preceding 2 years or is still a student attending a qualifying educational institution, and expects to complete a qualifying advanced degree by August 31 of the academic year in which the competition is held.

8 – INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Participants in the Pathways Internship Program will be referred to as Student Trainees.

8.1 – ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

8.1a – Program Eligibility Requirements

An individual who has been accepted for enrollment or who is enrolled and seeking a degree (diploma, certificate, etc.) from a qualifying educational institution as defined in 5 CFR 362.102, on a full or half-time basis (as defined by the institution in which the student is enrolled) is eligible for the USDA Internship Program. Student Trainees must be in good academic standing, as defined by the institution they are attending. Individuals must meet the definition of a student

throughout the duration of their Internship appointment. An individual who needs to complete less than the equivalent of half an academic/vocational or technical course-load immediately prior to graduating is still considered a student for purposes of this Program.

8.1b – Age and Employment of Minors

Participation in the Pathways Program must be in conformance with Federal, State, or local laws and standards governing the employment of minors. Typically, participants must be at least 16 years of age at the time of their appointment. Check with the State employment office for information on any hazardous occupation restrictions for employees under the age of 18.

8.1c – Citizenship

Non-citizens may be appointed to Intern positions in accordance with the requirements in 5 CFR 362.105e, provided that:

a. The Student Trainee is lawfully admitted to the United States as a permanent resident or is otherwise authorized to be employed.

b. The agency is authorized to pay certain aliens as provided in the annual Appropriations Act ban and any agency-specific enabling and appropriation statutes.

c. Student Trainees must be U.S. citizens to be eligible for non-competitive conversion to the competitive service.

d. Follow this link for guidance from OPM:

https://help.usajobs.gov/index.php/Employment_of_Non-citizens

e. Follow this link for guidance from USDA:

<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/EmployForeignNationals/index.htm>

8.1d – Driver's License

Student Trainees who are required to operate a government vehicle must have a valid State issued driver's license or an agency identification card indicating the type of vehicle or equipment the holder is authorized to drive or operate.

8.1e – Drug and Alcohol Testing

1. Executive Order 12564 of 1986 established the goal of a drug-free Federal workplace and makes it a condition of employment for all Federal employees to refrain from using illegal drugs on or off-duty. This Executive Order also contains the criteria for identifying testing-designated positions.

2. Under the Omnibus Transportation Employee Testing Act of 1991 (49 U.S.C sec. 2717), employees whose work requires them to have a commercial driver's license must be included in

a drug and alcohol testing program. Additional requirements are in USDA DR-4430-792-2, Drug-free Workplace Program.

3. In compliance with the Federal and Department requirements, employees who are paid by the National Finance Center and who either are in a testing designated position or have a job-related commercial driver's license are subject to random drug and/or alcohol testing requirements. Student Trainees meeting these criteria must also be drug tested, and the test must produce negative results before the applicant may be hired.

4. In compliance with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Drug-Free Workplace Program authorities, all employees are subject to drug testing based on reasonable suspicion and in post-accident situations. Only the Human Resources Management Directors or their acting's, have the authority to make findings of reasonable suspicion of drug use for Student Trainee's.

8.1f – Employment of Relatives

In accordance with 5 CFR, part 310, Student Trainees may work with a relative when there is no direct reporting relationship and the relative is not in a position to influence or control the student's appointment, employment, promotion, or advancement within the agency. See 5 CFR 362.105(f).

8.1g – Physical Fitness

Tentative job offers may be made contingent upon an individual passing any physical fitness test established for the position (5 CFR part 339, Subpart C), if applicable. Requirements must be clearly documented in the position description (5 CFR 339.203). Failure to meet the physical requirements for the position means that the Student Trainee is not qualified for the position unless a waiver or reasonable accommodation is indicated (5 CFR 339.102). When there are physical fitness requirements for positions, the requirements and consequences for failing to meet them during the appointment should be addressed in the USDA Pathways Programs Participant Agreement. (See section 11, [Exhibit 06](#)).

8.2 – RECRUITMENT REQUIREMENTS

8.2a – Recruitment Planning

a. Recruitment planning for the USDA Pathways Programs is vital to USDA's workforce. The Department's priorities of full utilization of hiring flexibilities and Cultural Transformation should be considered when filling positions in order to meet workforce diversity goals.

b. **NTE Student Trainees:** Student Trainees hired with a NTE date should be placed in temporary assignments and hired to complete temporary projects, to perform labor intensive tasks not requiring subject matter expertise, or to fill traditional summer jobs. Once the Intern with a NTE date separates from USDA, he/she must re-apply for a USDA internship, if he/she remains interested in an internship at USDA.

c. **Student Trainees without a NTE date:** Student Trainees hired without a NTE date are expected to perform long term assignments and be placed in occupations that are aligned with mission critical or hard to fill positions, until the Intern completes his/her graduation requirements. (Up to 8 years)

8.2b – Position Classification

A Student Trainee whose position is under the General Schedule or appropriate pay plan must be classified as a student trainee, to the –99 series of the appropriate occupational group. A Student Trainee whose position is under the Federal Wage System must be classified as a student trainee, to the –01 series of the appropriate occupational group. The grade level is set according to criteria in the appropriate OPM General Schedule or Federal Wage System classification standard.

8.2c – Recruitment and Outreach Advertisement

See section 11, [Exhibit 20](#), for a copy of the Recruitment and Outreach Advertisement Desk Aid.

8.2d – Internship Program Job Opportunity Announcements (JOA)

See Section 11, [Exhibit 18](#), for a copy of the JOA Desk Aid.

8.2e – Vacancy Announcements

1. The HR Practitioner must prepare a public announcement and post the announcement on USAJOBS for a minimum of 5 business days. The announcement must provide information on how to apply, position title, series and grade (career ladders have to be identified in the vacancy announcement), geographic location of the position, and provide a point of contact for those seeking more information about how to apply to Internship opportunities.

2. An open period for an announcement can also be defined by a specific number of applications to be received. This number must be specified in the vacancy announcement and must be a reasonable number that provides an adequate applicant pool. All applications received by 11:59 p.m. eastern time on the day that the specified number is reached should be accepted and processed.

3. Outreach with local universities, state employment offices and disability and veterans service offices, must also be completed.

8.2f – Recruitment Incentives

In accordance with 5 CFR, part 575, recruitment incentives are authorized and may be utilized for hard-to-fill positions.

8.3 – QUALIFICATIONS

8.3a – Qualification Requirements

1. Appointments may be made to any position for which the individual is qualified. The duties of the position to which the individual is appointed should be related to either the student trainee's academic or career goals. See 5 CFR, 362.203d(2).

2. Individuals will be evaluated against OPM qualification standard for the position being filled. See section 11, [Exhibit 01](#) and 5 CFR, 362.203c.

8.3b – Evaluation of Applicants

1. The evaluation of applicants may be accomplished using the following methods:

a. A determination of eligible and ineligible, with all eligibles being referred for consideration. Or numerical scores may be assigned to eligible applicants. Order of consideration will be followed as outlined in 5 CFR, 302.304.

b. Category ratings can be assigned, based on OPM guidance and USDA Directive (DR-4030-337-2)

2. The method used must be described in the vacancy announcement. Considerations for the method used are:

a. The position being filled and the required qualifications.

b. The number of applicants anticipated.

c. Quality ranking factors and/or assessment questions that can make meaningful distinctions between the candidates.

8.3c – Superior Qualifications

Although it would be highly unusual, student trainees are eligible for Superior Qualifications. See 5 CFR 531.212, for further guidance.

8.3d – Suitability Determinations

When issues of suitability and security arise, they should be addressed by employment officers (5 CFR, part 731, subpart B).

8.3e – Veteran's Preference

Veteran's preference applies in the arrangement of qualified applicants for all USDA Pathways Programs positions (5 CFR 302.101(a)). Qualified applicants eligible for veteran's preference will be referred and considered ahead of non-veterans.

8.3f – Written Tests

There are no written test requirements for entry or conversion to term or career or career-conditional positions within the Intern Program.

8.4 – APPOINTMENTS

8.4a – Equal Employment Opportunity

Appointments are subject to all laws, regulations, and policies governing equal employment opportunity.

8.4b – Program Appointment Requirements

1. Appointments to the USDA Internship Program are made in accordance with the Schedule D excepted service appointing authority provided in 5 CFR 213.3402(a).
2. Appointments may be made to any position, at any General Schedule grade or Federal Wage System, for which the individual is qualified. The duties of the position to which the individual is appointed should be related to the Intern's academic or career goals.
3. Student Trainees may be appointed on either a temporary basis of less than 1 year or for an initial period expected to last more than 1 year.
4. **NTE 1 Year Student Trainee:** Temporary appointments are made for a period not to exceed 1 year. Students hired with an NTE date should be placed in temporary assignments and hired to perform short term projects. Student Trainee may be extended in 1-year increments for, no more than 8 years, as long as the Intern meets the definition of a student. Once the Student Trainee with an NTE date separates from USDA, he/she must re-apply for a USDA Pathways Programs if he/she remains interested in an Internship at USDA.
5. **Student Trainee without a NTE date:** Student Trainees hired without a NTE date are expected to perform long term assignments and be placed in occupations that are aligned with mission critical or hard to fill positions, until the Intern completes his/her program requirements. (Up to 8 years)
 - a. Appointments for an initial period expected to last more than 1 year are not required to have a NTE date. However, Supervisors are required to specify a projected end date for the appointment in the Pathways Agreement (See section 11, [Exhibit 06](#)) with the Intern.
 - b. A Student Trainee without a NTE date may remain in his/her position, for up to 8 years, as long as she/he meets the definition of a student. For example, if a student completes a bachelor's degree and is accepted for enrollment in a qualifying graduate degree program, the Student Trainee may remain in the USDA Pathways Program for up to 8 years.
6. There is no limit on the number of times a student may be appointed to a position as long as the student meets eligibility requirements for the appointment.

7. Follow procedures for coding personnel actions in the Office of Personnel Management's Guide to Processing Personnel Actions, Chapter 11 and 14.

8.4c – Appointment Documentation

The following documentation is required for the appointment of Student Trainees:

- a. Application and resume from USAJOBS;
- b. OF-306, Declaration of Federal Employment;
- c. Evidence of citizenship;
- d. Official transcripts;
- e. Proof of veteran's preference (DD-214 Member 4 Copy), and if applicable, SF-15, "Application for 10-point veterans' preference, plus the proof required by that form (e.g. VA Letter).

8.4d – Tenure upon Appointment

1. A Student Trainee serving under a temporary appointment NTE 1 year, who has not completed 1 year of service, is in excepted service Tenure Group 0. An Intern serving under a temporary appointment NTE 1 year, who has completed 1 year of current, continuous service, is in excepted service Tenure Group III. (See 5 CFR 362.205(a)(1)(ii) and (iii).
2. A Student Trainee serving under an appointment for an initial period expected to last more than 1 year is in excepted service Tenure Group II for purposes of 5 CFR 362.205(a)(1) and afforded the same retention rights as other excepted service employees.

8.4e – USDA Pathways Programs Participant Agreement

Participant agreements must be completed prior to the Student Trainees entrance-on duty (EOD) and signed by the student for each academic year. The agreement must describe the general description of duties; evaluation procedures that will be used for the participant; requirements for continuation and successful completion of the program; work schedules; minimum eligibility requirements for non-competitive conversion to term or permanent competitive service employment according to the requirements of the applicable Pathways Program; and the length of the appointment and termination date. (See section 11, [Exhibit 06](#)). (5 CFR 362.106).

8.4f – Work Schedules/Telework

1. An intermittent schedule is prohibited under the USDA Pathways Programs. A Student Trainee may work a full-time or part-time schedule. Supervisors are responsible for establishing a work schedule for Student Trainees in accordance with 5 CFR, 610.121. The work schedule

should not interfere with his or her academic schedule. Supervisors and Student Trainees should agree on a formally-arranged schedule of school and work so that:

1. Work responsibilities do not interfere with academic performance;

b. Completion of the educational program (awarding of diploma/certificate/degree) and the Internship Program is accomplished in a reasonable and appropriate timeframe;

c. The Supervisor is informed and prepared for the student's periods of employment; and

d. Requirements for non-competitive conversion to term or permanent position in the competitive service are understood by all parties. See section 11, [Exhibit 06](#) for a sample Intern Program Agreement.

3. Student Trainees may or may not be eligible for telework. For more information on Telework, visit this link for USDA DR-4080-811-002:

<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2012/DR4080-811-002.pdf>

8.4g – Trial Period upon Initial Appointment

Student Trainees must serve a 2 year trial period. Prior Federal civilian service is credited toward the completion of the required trial period in the same manner as prescribed in 5 CFR 315.802.

8.4h – Pay Advance

The Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act of 1990 permits advance payment of basic pay for up to two pay periods to any individual who is newly appointed to a position (DPM, Bulletin 550-97; See section 11, [Exhibit 02](#) for further instructions).

8.4i – Service Credit for Annual Leave

Student Trainees are eligible for Service Credit for Annual Leave. See 5 CFR 630.205, for further guidance.

8.4j – Bargaining Unit Status

Student Trainees may be placed in a bargaining unit position and as such are included in the Local bargaining unit (BU). Orientations for student trainees identified as eligible bargaining unit employees will include any negotiated orientation requirements outlined in the applicable collective bargaining agreements. Check with your HR Practitioner or Labor Relations staff for a determination on whether or not the position is a bargaining or non-bargaining position.

8.5 – PAYMENT OF TRAVEL, TRANSPORTATION, AND TRANSFER OF STATION (TOS)

8.5a – Travel and Transportation Expenses – Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel

1. Travel payments and reimbursements are subject to Agency/Mission Area regulations. All travel authorizations, arrangements, and vouchers must be filed in the official electronic travel system. Units will ensure that all appropriate travel forms are completed in advance of travel and vouchers are filed within five days of returning from travel. Student Trainees must be made aware, in advance of travel, of what will and will not be reimbursed. Failure to comply with regulations may result in a debt due the government and the Student Trainee may be issued a bill for collection.

2. Student Trainees may or may not be eligible to apply for a government-issued travel charge card.

3. Student Trainees may apply for a travel advance for TDY expenses.

4. Authorizing officials will pay travel and transportation expenses related to mandatory training, such as travel and transportation between duty station and training location, for participants only.

5. For more information, please contact your Agency/Mission Area Budget and Finance Office.

8.5b – Transfer of Station (TOS)

1. Student Trainees are not eligible for relocation expenses upon initial appointment to the USDA Pathways Intern Program. At the discretion of the Agency/Mission Area, Student Trainees may or may not be eligible for relocation allowance when assigned to a permanent position upon completion of his/her academic program.

2. In accordance with Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) 302-2.6 (a), the new official station must be at least 50 miles further from the employee's current residence than the old official station is from the same residence. However, at the discretion of Agency Heads, exceptions may be made for extenuating circumstances that must be approved in writing by the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO). See FTR 302-2.6 (b) and USDA DR 2300-002 5k.

8.6 – ON-BOARDING

8.6a – On-Boarding

1. USDA Directive 4720-001, USDA On-boarding Requirements, requires responsible stewardship of resources and accountability for the strategic management of human resources, including the successful acclimation of new employees into the workplace. To achieve this goal, USDA has established a uniform framework for orienting new employees to the workplace.

2. A central Web page, for use by all agencies, containing important information for supervisors, sponsors, and new employees regarding the on-boarding process, can be accessed at: <http://www.dm.usda.gov/OBP>

8.6b – Supervisor’s On-Boarding Checklist

See section 11, [Exhibit 03](#).

8.7 – ORIENTATION

8.7a – Student Trainee Orientation

It is the Agency/Staff Office’s responsibility to ensure that each Student Trainee receives orientation. The Agency’s Employee Orientation Program provides information on employee benefits, ethics, conduct, etc. The Student Trainee should be provided additional orientation in accordance with the participant agreement in section 11, [Exhibit 06](#) and applicable collective bargaining agreements.

8.8 – INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (IDP)/MENTORING

8.8a – Individual Development Plans

1. Individual Development Plans (IDPs) are required for all Students who are expected to serve 90 days or more in a consecutive 12-month period. IDPs must be completed within 45 days of the employee’s appointment into the Pathways Program. The supervisor and employee meet annually to update the employee’s IDP – typically at the same time the employee is placed on a performance plan – but can be adjusted as necessary throughout the year to address changing requirements and needs. See [Exhibit 11](#), USDA Pathways Intern Program Training and Development Plan, for a list of required training.

2. The IDP process also provides an opportunity for the employee to share with the supervisor his/her goals and communicate his/her strengths and developmental needs. Employees’ IDP should be updated to address any training needs required to execute their duties at the full performance level of their current job and/or to address developmental needs as agreed upon between the supervisor and employee.

3. AgLearn has a wide variety of on-line courses and can be accessed at: <http://www.aglearn.usda.gov/>

8.8b – Student Trainee Mentorship

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that a Mentor is assigned to the Student, within 90 days of appointment. The Mentor should be someone from the appropriate level that is outside his or her chain of command. See section 11, [Exhibit 16](#) for a sample Mentoring Partnership Agreement.

8.9 – BENEFITS

8.9a – Student Benefits

1. Student Trainees without a NTE date are eligible for:

a. Annual and sick leave when in pay status. The amount of leave earned is the same as for permanent employees.

b. Promotion (See section [8.15a](#)), demotion, detail, or reassignment to other positions. These actions may be taken as the agency determines appropriate.

c. Within-grade pay increases when they perform at the successful level. The waiting periods are the same as for permanent employees (See section [8.15b](#) and [8.15c](#)).

d. Coverage under the Federal Employees' Health Benefits (FEHB) and Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) programs. Coverage is available to Student Trainee who are employed under an OPM approved career-related work-study program under Schedule D of at least 1 year's duration and who is expected to be in a pay status for at least one-third of the total period of time from the date of the first appointment to the completion of the work-study program.

e. Participation in the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) and the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) unless otherwise eligible for Civil Service Retirement System or CSRS Offset. Student Trainees covered under any of the three retirement systems, are eligible to participate in the TSP.

2. Student Trainees with a NTE date are eligible for:

a. Annual and sick leave when in pay status. The amount of leave earned is the same as for permanent employees. Students must be employed for a period of 90 days of continuous service to be eligible to earn annual leave (5 U.S.C. 6303).

b. Promotion (See section [8.15a](#)), demotion, detail, or reassignment to other positions. These actions may be taken as the agency determines appropriate.

c. NTE Student Trainees are not eligible for within-grade pay increases, even if appointment is extended beyond 1 year.

d. Coverage under the Federal Employees' Health Benefits (FEHB) Program. After he/she has completed one year of current continuous employment, excluding any break in service of 5 days or less, and the appointment is extended beyond the initial one year period. The one year requirement may be met at the end of a one year appointment in a single agency or it may be based on a series of shorter appointments served in one or more agencies, as long as he/she has not had a break in service of more than 5 days. Eligibility under this provision requires payment of 100 percent of the premium (that is, both the Government's and the employee's shares).

e. NTE Student Trainees are generally not eligible for federal retirement benefits.

8.10 – CONVERSIONS

8.10a – Training & Work Requirements Prior to Conversion (5 CFR 362.204)

1. Prior to conversion to a term or career or career conditional appointment, Student Trainees must satisfactorily complete all training, program, and educational requirements, as prescribed in the USDA DR and this Handbook.

2. Completed at least 640 hours of work related experience acquired through the Internship Program while otherwise enrolled as a full-time or part-time, degree-seeking student.

3. Up to 320 hours acquired through a comparable non-Federal internship program meeting the criteria set forth in paragraphs (2) of this section may be credited toward the 640-hour minimum requirement.

4. Completed a course of academic study within the 120-day period preceding the appointment, at a qualifying educational institution conferring a diploma, certificate, or degree;

5. To be creditable under paragraph (4) of this section, work experience must be acquired under an Internship Program appointment, another previous Federal appointment (*e.g.*, fellowships and similar programs in accordance with 5 CFR 362.204, or while the student:

a. Worked in, but not for, a Federal agency, pursuant to a formal internship agreement, comparable to the Internship Program under this subpart, between the agency and an accredited academic institution, including as a student volunteer as defined by 5 CFR part 308;

b. Worked in, but not for, a Federal agency, pursuant to a written contract with a third-party internship provider officially established to provide internship experiences to students which is comparable to the Internship Program. **or**

c. Served as an active duty member of the armed forces of the United States (including the National Guard and Reserves), as defined in 5 U.S.C. 2101, and has been discharged or released from active duty in the armed forces under honorable conditions.

6. An agency may waive up to one-half (*i.e.*, 320 hours) of the 640-hour minimum service requirement, if a student enrolled in an accredited college or university completes 320 hours of career-related work experience under an Internship Program appointment, and has demonstrated high potential as evidenced by outstanding academic achievement and exceptional job performance, as follows:

a. Outstanding academic achievement must be demonstrated by an overall grade point average of 3.5 or better, on a 4.0 scale; standing in the top 10 percent of the student's graduating class; and/or induction into a nationally-recognized scholastic honor society. Notwithstanding

these differences, agencies may still refer to “superior academic achievement” in OPM’s Qualifications Standards for General Schedule Positions available on the OPM Web site at <http://www.opm.gov> to obtain specific guidance on grade point average, class standing, and nationally recognized honor societies.

b. Exceptional job performance must be demonstrated by a formal evaluation conducted by the student’s internship supervisor(s), consistent with the applicable performance appraisal program that results in a rating of record (or summary rating) higher than Fully Successful or equivalent.

7. In no event may an agency grant a credit or waiver (or a combination of a credit and waiver) totaling more than 320 hours of the 640-hour minimum service requirement.

a. Student volunteer service under 5 CFR part 308 may be evaluated, considered, and credited under this section when that experience is determined by the agency to be comparable in scope to experience gained in the Internship Program.

8. Supervisors must ensure that a annual Individual Development Plan (IDP) is completed by the Intern.

9. Student Trainees must complete 40 hours of mandatory AgLearn Training. Training and development is imperative to the success of each USDA Pathways Programs participant. Therefore, all USDA Agencies and Staff Offices will ensure that Student Trainee complete the required training as outlined in the USDA Pathways Programs Training Plan. The required courses will be taken in AgLearn. Completion of the required 40 hours of training is a prerequisite for conversion to a career or career-conditional appointment. Virtual University maintains oversight of all training and professional development for USDA Pathways participants. USDA Agencies and Staff Offices may require Student Trainee to take additional training. However, the additional training must not interfere with the required 40 hours of training outlined in the USDA Pathways Programs Training Plan. USDA Agencies and Staff Offices may use their training authority in 5 U.S.C. Chapter 41 and 5 CFR, part 410 to pay all or part of the students training expenses.

8.10b – Conversion from Student Trainee to Permanent Appointment

1. Student Trainees with or without NTE dates are eligible for conversion to term, career or career conditional appointments upon meeting the program requirements.

2. Student Trainees must be converted to the same line of work they were initially appointed to. For example: A Student Trainee applied for a GS-0299 Pathways vacancy announcement and upon completion of all program requirements he/she must be converted to a position in the 0200 Human Resources Management Group. In rare cases, a NTE Student Trainee can be converted to a career ladder position within the competitive service.

3. Student Trainees must be U.S. citizens prior to conversion to a term or career or career conditional appointment. See section [8.1c](#).

4. Subject to any limits on conversion imposed by the OPM Director, USDA Agencies and Staff offices may non-competitively convert an eligible Intern to a term or permanent competitive service position. Student Trainees converted to term appointments may later be non-competitively converted to a permanent competitive service position.

5. A Student Trainee who is non-competitively converted to a competitive service term appointment may be subsequently converted non-competitively to a permanent competitive service position.

6. Non-competitive conversion may be to a position within the same agency or any other agency within the Federal Government.

7. Time spent serving as a Student Trainee counts towards career tenure when the individual is non-competitively converted to a permanent position in the competitive service upon completion of the Program.

8. Student Trainees are eligible for non-competitive conversion to the competitive service upon successful completion of their Program and any other applicable conversion requirements. Service in the Pathways Program confers no right to further employment in either the competitive or excepted service. An agency wishing to convert a student must therefore execute the required action to do so within 120 days of successful completion of the degree and program requirements.

9. If for some reason the unit is unable to place the participant, the employing unit should explore placement opportunities with other units or Federal agencies at least 90 days prior to the end of the Intern's eligibility period.

8.10c – Probationary Period

A Student Trainee converted to a full-time career or career-conditional position in the competitive service under this section does not have to serve a probationary period and acquires competitive status immediately upon conversion.

8.10d – Tenure upon Conversion

1. Time spent serving as a Pathways Programs participant counts towards career tenure when the individual is non-competitively converted to a permanent position in the competitive service upon completion of the Program, with or without an intervening term appointment, and without a break in service of one day.

2. A Student Trainee whose appointment is converted to career or career conditional becomes a career employee upon completing the service requirement for career tenure or is excepted in accordance with 5 CFR 315.201.

8.11 – EXTENSIONS AND BREAKS IN PROGRAM

8.11a – Extensions to Appointment in Intern Program

1. **NTE Student Trainee:** NTE Student Trainees may be extended in NTE 1 year increments (up to 8 years), as long as the Intern NTE continues to meet the program eligibility requirements outlined in section 2.11a. See 5 CFR, 213.104(b)(3)(ii). Supervisors must submit a request for an extension to their Mission Area Human Resources Directors (MAHRD), 45 days prior to the end of the initial NTE date. The request must be made via email or mail on the official USDA Pathways Extension Request Form (See section 11, [Exhibit 08](#)).

2. **Student Trainee without a NTE date:** Extensions are not appropriate for a Student Trainee without a NTE date. NTE Student Trainee appointments shall not exceed 8 years.

8.11b – Breaks in Program

1. In rare cases, Student Trainees and their respective supervisors may need to request a break in the program. A break in program is defined as a period of time when an Intern is working but is unable to go to school, or is neither attending classes nor working at the agency. The best interests of the student and the department must be balanced in making these decisions. Therefore, a request for a break in the program must be sent to the USDA Pathways Programs Officer 45 days prior to the break in the program. The request must be made via email or mail on the official USDA Pathways Programs Break in the Program Request Form (See section 11, [Exhibit 07](#)). Before submitting the form, the supervisor must approve the request, the Intern must sign the request and submit relevant documentation, and an HR Specialist must acknowledge receipt of the request. Justification from the USDA Pathways Programs Officer must be provided if the request is denied. A copy of the Student Trainee's Participation Agreement must be updated and filed in the Student Trainees personnel file, if the request is approved.

2. It is the intent of the USDA Intern Program that the Student Trainees are either attending classes or working at the agency, or both, at all times while employed under the program. Upon approval of a break in the program, the Student Trainee should be placed on Leave Without Pay (LWOP), if he/she is not working. A Student Trainee (NTE) must not be placed on LWOP longer than 30 days, throughout the duration of the appointment

8.12 – STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT AND AGREEMENT

8.12a – Student Loan Repayment and Agreement

1. Student loan repayment is not an entitlement. The repayments may be all or part of any outstanding federally insured student loan or loans previously taken out by a candidate who has been appointed to a job or to retain a Student Trainee.

2. Before any loan repayments may be made an employee must sign a written agreement to complete a specified period of employment with the agency and to reimburse the agency for loan repayment benefits if the employee is separated involuntarily due to misconduct or failure to

maintain an acceptable level of performance, employee leaves the agency voluntarily or violates any other condition of the agreement. This agreement may also specify any other employment conditions the agency considers to be appropriate. See section 11, [Exhibit 05](#) for a sample service agreement.

8.13 – TRAINING AND TUITION/ACADEMIC DEGREE REIMBURSEMENT AND SERVICE AGREEMENT

8.13a – Training Reimbursement

1. USDA Agencies and Staff Offices may pay all or part of the Student Trainee’s training expenses directly related to the employee’s official duties.

2. If the Student Trainee receives financial assistance, USDA Agencies and Staff Offices must complete a Form SF- 182, Request, Authorization, Agreement and Certification of Training, to document the training and funds expended.

8.13b – Tuition/Academic Degree Reimbursement and Service Agreement

1. Student Trainees are eligible for tuition/academic degree training reimbursement (5 CFR 410.308). When the USDA Agencies and Staff Offices pay a Student Trainee’s tuition and related college expenses, the Student Trainee must sign an agreement to commit to work for a specified period of time as per the agreement.

2. Service agreements must be completed, and signed by the student for each school term that the student receives financial assistance from USDA. The Student Trainee’s supervisor and servicing Human Resources Office are responsible for tracking and monitoring the agreement form and ensuring that the Intern completes the conditions of the agreement. A copy of the agreement must be maintained in the employee’s Official Personnel Folder (OPF). See section 11, [Exhibit 04](#) for a sample service agreement (5 CFR 410.309).

3. Upon satisfactory completion of the Student Trainee’s academic training and Pathways program requirements, Agencies and Staff Offices may offer the Student Trainee either a permanent career or a career-conditional appointment in order to meet Government Education and Training Act requirements.

a. If a Student Trainee is unwilling to accept the offer of either a term, permanent career or a career-conditional appointment, the Student Trainee shall be responsible for repayment of all tuition and related college expenses received as per the agreement.

b. The payment agreed to under this section may not be required of a Student Trainee who leaves the service of USDA to enter into the service of another agency in any branch of the Government, unless it is specified otherwise in the agreement (See section 11, [Exhibit 04](#)) and (5 U.S.C. 4108b).

8.14 – PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND AWARDS

8.14a – Performance Appraisal

1. For all Student Trainee appointments over 90 days, standards and measures must be established and acknowledged within 30 days of employment. Student Trainees must be on a performance plan for 90 days, before a performance rating may be prepared. (See USDA DR 4040-430, Performance Management).

2. Supervisors shall establish performance standards and conduct performance evaluations in accordance with USDA DR 4040-430, Performance Management, for Student Trainees in accordance with Agency requirements in order to:

- a. Identify the expectations to include how the employee will be measured.
- b. Provide regular feedback to the employee regarding how they are meeting or not meeting expectations.
- c. Identify opportunities for professional development.

3. Standards and elements must be developed and signed and a comprehensive training plan must be developed. Performance appraisals should document both positive and negative feedback of the Student Trainee's performance.

8.14b – Awards

Student Trainees are eligible for awards and recognition in accordance with the USDA Guide for Employee Recognition.

8.15 – PROMOTIONS AND WITHIN-GRADE INCREASES (WGI)

8.15a – Promotions

1. USDA Agencies and Staff Offices may promote Student Trainees who meets the OPM qualification requirements for the position in accordance with the USDA Pathways MOU, USDA DR on Pathways Programs, OPM Group Qualifications Standards for Pathways Positions, and in this Handbook. This provision does not confer entitlement to promotion.

2. Student Trainees without a NTE date are eligible for a career ladder promotion upon meeting qualification standards and other eligibility requirements, pursuant to the USDA DR and USDA Pathways Programs Qualification Standards. The career ladder had to be identified in the original vacancy announcement that the Student Trainee was selected from.

3. NTE Student Trainees are eligible for career ladder promotion upon meeting qualification standards and other eligibility requirements, pursuant to the USDA DR and USDA Pathways Programs Qualification Standards. The career ladder had to be identified in the original vacancy

announcement that the Student Trainee was selected from. Such actions are processed as conversion actions.

4. Time-in-grade (TIG) restrictions apply only to competitive service positions; therefore, TIG does not apply to Student Trainee appointments. Student Trainees must meet 1 year of specialized experience as outlined in the OPM qualifications standards.

8.15b – General Schedule Within-Grade Increases (WGIs)

1. WGIs apply only to GS employees occupying permanent positions. "Permanent position" is defined in 5 CFR 531.403 as a position filled by an employee whose appointment is not designated as temporary and does not have a definite time limitation of 1 year or less. "Permanent position" includes a position to which an employee is promoted on a temporary or term basis for at least 1 year. The term does not include a position filled by an employee whose appointment is limited to 1 year or less and subsequently extended so that the total time of the appointment exceeds 1 year.

2. NTE 1 year Student Trainees are not eligible for WGIs.

3. Student Trainees appointed to a position lasting more than 1 year, will be automatically advanced to the next higher rate of his or her grade at the beginning of the first applicable pay period following completion of the required waiting period, provided their performance is satisfactory and not received an equivalent increase in pay during his or her waiting period. A Student Trainee's performance is satisfactory when he or she achieves or maintains a performance rating of satisfactory or better.

8.15c – Wage Grade Within-Grade Increases (WGIs)

Student Trainees appointed to Wage Grade positions regardless of type of appointment, are entitled to WGIs. Student Trainees will be automatically advanced to the next higher rate of his or her grade at the beginning of the first applicable pay period following completion of the required waiting period, provided their performance in the position is satisfactory and had not received an equivalent increase in pay during the waiting period. A Student Trainee's performance is satisfactory when he/she achieves or maintains a performance rating of satisfactory or better.

8.16 – DETAILS

8.16a – Details for Student Trainee

Although it is not recommended, Student Trainees may be detailed to other positions within the competitive service. See 5 CFR, Section 300.301(b) and 5 U.S.C. 3341.

8.17 – REDUCTION-IN-FORCE (RIF)

8.17a – Reduction-in-Force

Student Trainees are covered by 5 CFR, part 351 for purposes of RIF.

a. A Student Trainee serving under an appointment for an initial period expected to last more than 1 year is in excepted service Tenure Group II for purposes of 5 CFR 362.205.

b. A Student Trainee serving under a temporary appointment is in excepted service Tenure Group III for purposes of 5 CFR, 362.205, provided they have completed at least 1 year of current continuous service. If not, the Student Trainee is in Tenure Group 0 for purposes of 5 CFR 362,205.

8.18 – TERMINATIONS

8.18a – Termination for other reasons not related to Performance or Conduct

1. USDA Agencies and Staff Offices must terminate Student Trainees who are not converted at the end of the program period. USDA Agencies and Staff Offices must terminate Student Trainees who are not converted at the end of the program period. This occurs 120 days after completion of the designated academic course of study (unless the student trainee is converted) or upon expiration of the NTE internship appointment. (See section [8.11a](#)), if applicable.

2. Student Trainees who fail to maintain the eligibility requirements of the USDA Pathways Program must be terminated from the Program.

3. Student Trainees are afforded the same retention rights as excepted service employees and may qualify for severance pay if involuntarily separated under 5 CFR part 550, subpart G.

8.18b – Termination for Failure to Meet Physical Requirements

Student Trainees failing to continue to meet physical requirements may be terminated in accordance with 5 CFR, part 339.

8.18c – Termination for Performance or Conduct

1. USDA Agencies and Staff Offices may terminate a Student Trainee for reasons related to misconduct, poor performance, or suitability, or failure to meet the definition of a student.

2. Supervisors should contact the servicing Human Resources Management office immediately for advice and assistance if performance or conduct problems occur with a Student Trainee. Whenever a Student Trainee is discharged due to poor conduct or performance, USDA Agencies and Staff Offices must prepare adequate documentation outlining the facts leading to discharge and all counseling efforts made prior to discharge. Student Trainees may be separated if they are not in good standing with their educational institution or are placed on academic suspension or probation.

3. If separated due to poor performance or conduct, Student Trainees employed under the USDA Pathways Program generally have no procedural or appeal rights; however, there are two exceptions:

a. Student Trainees who are preference eligible and who have completed one year of current continuous service in the same or similar position(s) are entitled to procedural rights under 5 CFR part 432 (unacceptable performance) or 5 CFR part 752 (misconduct). Student Trainees covered under a bargaining unit are subject to applicable provisions of their negotiated collective bargaining agreements. In addition, they have the right to appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board.

b. Non-preference eligible Student Trainees who have completed two years of current continuous employment in the same or similar position(s) are entitled to the procedural rights but not the appeal rights under 5 CFR, part 432.

8.19 – PERSONNEL CEILINGS AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

8.19a – Personnel Ceilings

Student Trainees count against full-time equivalent (FTE) ceilings, pursuant to Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Bulletin 93-03, March 4, 1993.

8.19b – Reporting Requirements

USDA periodically requires USDA Agencies and Staff Offices to report USDA Pathways Program Internship hires.

9 – RECENT GRADUATE PROGRAM

9.1 – ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

9.1a – Program Eligibility Requirements

1. A Recent Graduate is an individual who obtained a qualifying associates, bachelors, master's, professional, doctorate, vocational or technical degree or certificate from a qualifying educational institution, within the previous 2 years or other applicable period provided below.

2. Except as provided in paragraph (3) of this section, an individual may apply for a position in the USDA Recent Graduates Program only if the individual's application is received not later than 2 years after the date the individual completed all requirements of an academic course of study leading to a qualifying associates, bachelor's, master's, professional, doctorate, vocational or technical degree or certificate from a qualifying educational institution.

3. A veteran, as defined in 5 U.S.C. 2108, who, due to a military service obligation, was precluded from applying to the Recent Graduates Program during any portion of the 2-year eligibility period described in paragraph (1) of this section shall have a full 2-year period of eligibility upon his or her release or discharge from active duty. In no event, however, may the individual's eligibility period extend beyond 6 years from the date on which the individual completed the requirements of an academic course of study.

9.1b – Age and Employment of Minors

Participation in the USDA Recent Graduate Program must be in conformance with Federal, State, or local laws and standards governing the employment of minors. All USDA Recent Graduates must be at least 16 years of age at the time of their appointment. Check with the State employment office for information on any hazardous occupation restrictions for employees under the age of 18.

9.1c – Citizenship

Non-citizens may be appointed to Recent Graduates positions in accordance with the requirements in 5 CFR 362.105e, provided that:

- a. The Recent Graduate is lawfully admitted to the United States as a permanent resident or is otherwise authorized to be employed.
- b. The agency is authorized to pay certain aliens as provided in the annual Appropriations Act ban and any agency-specific enabling and appropriation statutes.
- c. Recent Graduates must be U.S. citizens to be eligible for non-competitive conversion to the competitive service.
- d. Follow this link for guidance from OPM:
https://help.usajobs.gov/index.php/Employment_of_Non-citizens
- e. Follow this link for guidance from USDA:
<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/EmployForeignNationals/index.htm>

9.1d – Driver's License

USDA Recent Graduates who are required to operate a government vehicle must have a valid State issued driver's license or an agency identification card indicating the type of vehicle or equipment the holder is authorized to drive or operate.

9.1e – Drug and Alcohol Testing

1. Executive Order 12564 of 1986 established the goal of a drug-free Federal workplace and makes it a condition of employment for all Federal employees to refrain from using illegal drugs on or off-duty. This Executive Order also contains the criteria for identifying testing-designated positions.
2. Under the Omnibus Transportation Employee Testing Act of 1991 (49 U.S.C sec. 2717), employees whose work requires them to have a commercial driver's license must be included in a drug and alcohol testing program. Additional requirements are in USDA DR-4430-792-2, Drug-free Workplace Program.

3. In compliance with the Federal and Department requirements, employees who are paid by the National Finance Center and who either are in a testing designated position or have a job-related commercial driver's license are subject to random drug and/or alcohol testing requirements. Recent Graduate's meeting these criteria must also be drug tested, and the test must produce negative results before the applicant may be hired.

4. In compliance with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Drug-Free Workplace Program authorities, all employees are subject to drug testing based on reasonable suspicion and in post-accident situations. Only the Human Resources Management Directors or their acting's, have the authority to make findings of reasonable suspicion of drug use for Recent Graduate's.

9.1f – Employment of Relatives

USDA Recent Graduate Program participants may work at USDA with a relative provided that there is no direct reporting relationship and the relative is not in a position to influence or control the student's appointment, employment, promotion, or advancement within the agency. See 5 CFR 362.105(f).

9.1g – Physical Fitness

Tentative job offers may be made contingent upon an individual passing any physical fitness test established for the position (5 CFR part 339, Subpart C), if applicable. Requirements must be clearly documented in the position description (5 CFR 339.203). Failure to meet the physical requirements for the position means that the Recent Graduate is not qualified for the position unless a waiver or reasonable accommodation is indicated (5 CFR 339.102). When there are physical fitness requirements for positions, the requirements and consequences for failing to meet them during the appointment should be addressed in the USDA Pathways Programs Participant Agreement. (See section 11, [Exhibit 09](#)).

9.2 – RECRUITMENT REQUIREMENTS

9.2a – Recruitment Planning

Recruitment planning for the USDA Pathways Recent Graduate Program should be executed in accordance with the Pathways Programs public notice requirements.

9.2b – Position Classification

Classification of the position is based on the occupational series for which the Recent Graduate is hired. The grade level is set according to criteria in the appropriate General Schedule or Federal Wage System classification standard.

9.2c – Recruitment and Outreach Advertisement

See section 11, [Exhibit 20](#), for a copy of the Recruitment and Outreach Advertisement Desk Aid.

9.2d – Recent Graduate Job Opportunity Announcements (JOA)

See Section 11, [Exhibit 19](#), for a copy of the JOA Desk Aid.

9.2e – Vacancy Announcements

1. The HR Practitioner must prepare a public announcement and post the announcement on USAJOBS for a minimum of 5 business days. The announcement must provide information on how to apply, position title, series and grade (career ladders have to be identified in the vacancy announcement), geographic location of the position, and provide a point of contact for those seeking more information about how to apply to Internship opportunities.

2. An open period for an announcement can also be defined by a specific number of applications to be received. This number must be specified in the vacancy announcement and must be a reasonable number that provides an adequate applicant pool. All applications received by 11:59 p.m. eastern time on the day that the specified number is reached should be accepted and processed.

3. Outreach with local universities, state employment offices and disability and veterans service offices, must also be completed.

9.2f – Recruitment Incentives

In accordance with 5 CFR, part 575, recruitment incentives are authorized and may be utilized for hard-to-fill positions.

9.3 – QUALIFICATIONS

9.3a – Qualification Requirements

Candidates must be evaluated using OPM qualification standards for the occupation and grade level of the position being filled. Applicants must also meet the eligibility requirements in section [9.1a](#).

9.3b – Evaluation of Applicants

1. The evaluation of applicants may be done using the following method:

a. A determination of eligible and ineligible. With all eligible being referred or consideration or with the assignment of numerical scores. Order of consideration will be followed as outlined in 5 CFR,302.304.

b. Category ratings can be assigned, based on OPM guidance and USDA Directive (DR-4030.337)

2. The method used must be described in the vacancy announcement. Considerations for the method used are:

- a. The position being filled and the required qualifications.
- b. The number of applicants anticipated.
- c. Quality ranking factors and/or assessment questions that can make meaningful distinctions between the candidates.

9.3c – Superior Qualifications

Although it would be highly unusual, Recent Graduates are eligible for Superior Qualifications. See 5 CFR 531.212, for further guidance.

9.3d – Suitability Determinations

When issues of suitability and security arise, they should be addressed by employment officers (5 CFR, part 731, subpart B).

9.3e – Veteran's Preference

Veteran's preference applies in the arrangement of qualified applicants for all USDA Pathways Programs positions (5 CFR 302.101(a)). Qualified applicants eligible for veteran's preference will be referred and considered ahead of non-veterans.

9.3f – Written Tests

There are no written test requirements for entry or conversion to term or career or career-conditional positions within the USDA Recent Graduate Program.

9.4 – APPOINTMENTS

9.4a – Equal Employment Opportunity

Appointments are subject to all laws, regulations, and policies governing equal employment opportunity.

9.4b – Program Appointment Requirements

1. Appointments to the USDA Recent Graduate Program, are made in accordance with the Schedule D excepted service appointing authority provided in 5 CFR 213.3402(b).

- a. Recent Graduate appointments are intended to last for a 1-year period, unless the training requirements of the position warrant a longer and more structured training program. Employment under the USDA Recent Graduates Program may not exceed 2 years, plus any agency approved extension of up to an additional 120 days. An established extension request form must be sent to the USDA Pathways Programs Officer within 30 days of the request for a period lasting over 2 years

b. Initial appointments of a Recent Graduate can be made to any position identified to be filled under this authority for which the Recent Graduate qualifies up to the GS–09 level (or equivalent under another pay and classification system, such as the Federal Wage System), except as provided in paragraph (c) and (d), of this section.

c. Initial appointments to positions for science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) occupations may be made at the GS–11 level, if the candidate possesses a Master’s degree or equivalent and a GS-12 level, if the candidate possesses a Ph.D. or equivalent doctoral degree directly related to the STEM position the agency is seeking to fill.

d. Initial appointments to scientific and professional research positions at the GS–12 level for which the classification and qualification criteria for research positions apply, if the candidate possesses a Ph.D. or equivalent degree directly related to the position the agency is seeking to fill.

9.4c – Appointment Documentation

The following documentation is required for the appointment of Recent Graduates:

- a. Application and resume from USAJOBS;
- b. OF-306, Declaration of Federal Employment;
- c. Evidence of citizenship;
- d. Official transcripts;
- e. Proof of veteran’s preference (DD-214 Member 4 Copy), and if applicable, SF-15, “Application for 10-point veterans’ preference, plus the proof required by that form (e.g. VA Letter). A veteran who was unable to apply during the 2-year eligibility period because of military service must submit documentation which supports the exception, e.g. DD-214 which reflects date of entry that is within 2 years of the completion of qualifying education and application for the Pathways Program.

9.4d – Tenure upon Appointment

Recent Graduates are appointed to Tenure Group II for purposes of 5 CFR 362.306 and afforded the same retention rights as other excepted service employees.

9.4e – USDA Pathways Programs Participant Agreement

A USDA Pathways Programs Participant Agreement must be completed before the Recent Graduate’s entrance-on duty (EOD) and signed by the Recent Graduate. The agreement must describe the general description of duties; evaluation procedures that will be used for the participant; requirements for continuation and successful completion of the program; work schedules; minimum eligibility requirements for non-competitive conversion to term or

permanent competitive service employment according to the requirements of the applicable Pathways Program; and the length of the appointment and termination date. See section 11, [Exhibit 09](#) for a sample Recent Graduate Agreement (5 CFR 362.106).

9.4f – Work Schedules/Telework

1. An intermittent schedule is prohibited under the USDA Recent Graduates Program. A Recent Graduate may work a full-time or part-time schedule. Supervisors are responsible for establishing a work schedule for a Recent Graduate in accordance with 5 CFR 610.121. Supervisors and Recent Graduates should agree on a formally-arranged schedule. See section 11, [Exhibit 09](#).

2. Recent Graduates may or may not be eligible for telework. For more information on Telework, visit this link for USDA DR-4080-811-002:
<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2012/DR4080-811-002.pdf>

9.4g – Trial Period upon Initial Appointment

The duration of the Recent Graduate's appointment in the excepted service is the trial period. Prior Federal civilian service is credited toward the completion of the required trial period in the same manner as prescribed in 5 CFR 315.802.

9.4h – Pay Advances

The Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act of 1990 permits advance payment of basic pay for up to two pay periods to any individual who is newly appointed to a position (DPM, Bulletin 550-97; See section 11, [Exhibit 02](#) for further instructions).

9.4i – Service Credit for Annual Leave

Recent Graduates are eligible for Service Credit for Annual Leave. See 5 CFR, part 630.205, for further guidance.

9.4j – Bargaining Unit Status

Recent Graduates may be placed in a bargaining unit position and as such are included in the Local bargaining unit (BU). Orientations for student trainees identified as eligible bargaining unit employees will include any negotiated orientation requirements outlined in the applicable collective bargaining agreements. Check with your HR Practitioner or Labor Relations staff for a determination on whether or not the position is a bargaining or non-bargaining position.

9.5 – PAYMENT OF TRAVEL, TRANSPORTATION, AND TRANSFER OF STATION (TOS)

9.5a – Travel and Transportation Expenses – Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel

1. Travel payments and reimbursements are subject to Agency/Mission Area regulations. All travel authorizations, arrangements, and vouchers must be filed in the official electronic travel system. Units will ensure that all appropriate travel forms are completed in advance of travel and vouchers are filed within five days of returning from travel. Recent Graduates must be made aware, in advance of travel, of what will and will not be reimbursed. Failure to comply with regulations may result in a debt due the government and the Recent Graduate may be issued a bill for collection.

2. Recent Graduates may or may not be eligible to apply for a government-issued travel charge card.

3. Recent Graduates may apply for a travel advance for TDY expenses.

4. Authorizing officials will pay travel and transportation expenses related to mandatory training, such as travel and transportation between duty station and training location, for participants only.

5. For more information, please contact your Agency/Mission Area Budget and Finance Office.

9.5b – Transfer of Station (TOS)

1. Recent Graduates are eligible for relocation expenses. For further guidance see Federal Travel Regulation (FTR), 5 U.S.C. 5723 and USDA DR 2300-002.

2. In accordance with Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) 302-2.6 (a), the new official station must be at least 50 miles further from the employee's current residence than the old official station is from the same residence. However, at the discretion of Agency Heads, exceptions may be made for extenuating circumstances that must be approved in writing by the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO). See FTR 302-2.6 (b) and USDA DR 2300-002 5k.

9.6 – ON-BOARDING

9.6a – On-Boarding

1. USDA Directive 4720-001, USDA On-boarding Requirements, requires responsible stewardship of resources and accountability for the strategic management of human resources, including the successful acclimation of new employees into the workplace. To achieve this goal, USDA has established a uniform framework for orienting new employees to the workplace.

2. A central Web page, for use by all agencies, containing important information for supervisors, sponsors, and new employees regarding the on-boarding process, can be accessed at: <http://www.dm.usda.gov/OBP>.

9.6b – Supervisor's On-Boarding Checklist

See section 11, [Exhibit 03](#).

9.7 – ORIENTATION

9.7a – Recent Graduates Orientation

USDA Agencies and Staff Offices are responsible for ensuring that each Recent Graduate receives orientation. The Agency’s Employee Orientation Program provides information on employee benefit, ethics, conduct, and so on. The Recent Graduate should be provided additional orientation in accordance with the USDA Pathways Programs Participant Agreement in section 11, [Exhibit 09](#) and applicable collective bargaining agreements.

9.8 – INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (IDP)/MENTORING

9.8a – Individual Development Plans

1. Ensure, within 45 days of appointment, that each Recent Graduate has an Individual Development Plan (IDP) that is approved by his or her supervisor. See [Exhibit 12](#), USDA Pathways Recent Graduates Program Training and Development Plan for a list of required training.

2. Individual Development Plans (IDPs) are required for all USDA Recent Graduates. The supervisor and Recent Graduate must meet annually to update the Recent Graduate’s IDP – typically at the same time the Recent Graduate is placed on a performance plan – but can be adjusted as necessary throughout the year to address changing requirements and needs. The IDP process also provides an opportunity for the employee to share with the supervisor his/her goals and communicate his/her strengths and developmental needs. The Recent Graduate’s IDP should be updated to address any training needs required to execute their duties at the full performance level of their current job and/or to address developmental needs as agreed upon between the supervisor and Recent Graduate.

3. AgLearn has a wide variety of on-line courses and can be accessed at:
<http://www.aglearn.usda.gov/>

9.8b – Recent Graduate Mentorship

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that a Mentor is assigned to the Recent Graduate, within 90 days of appointment. The Mentor should be someone from the appropriate level that is outside his or her chain of command. See section 11, [Exhibit 16](#) for a sample Mentoring Partnership Agreement.

9.9 – BENEFITS

9.9a – Recent Graduate Benefits

1. Annual and sick leave when in pay status. The amount of leave earned is the same as for permanent employees.

2. Promotion (see chapter 3, section [9.16a](#)), demotion, detail, or reassignment to other positions. These actions may be taken in accordance to the USDA DR and OPM Regulations.

3. Within-grade pay increases when they perform at the successful level. The waiting periods are the same as for permanent employees (see chapter 3, section [9.16b](#) and [9.16c](#)).

4. Coverage under the Federal Employees' Health Benefits (FEHB) and Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) programs.

5. Participation in the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) and the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) unless otherwise eligible for Civil Service Retirement System or CSRS Offset. Recent Graduates covered under any of the three retirement systems, are eligible to participate in the TSP.

9.10 – CONVERSIONS

9.10a – Training Requirements Prior to Conversion

1. Supervisors must provide at least 40 hours of formal interactive training per year that advances the goals and competencies outlined in each Recent Graduate's IDP. Mandatory annual training, such as information security and ethics training, does not count towards the 40-hour requirement.

2. Supervisors must ensure that an annual Individual Development Plan (IDP) is completed by the Recent Graduate.

3. Recent Graduates must complete 40 hours of mandatory AgLearn Training. Training and development is imperative to the success of each USDA Pathways Programs participant. Therefore, all USDA Agencies and Staff Offices will ensure that Recent Graduate complete the required training as outlined in the USDA Pathways Programs Training Plan. The required courses will be taken in AgLearn. Completion of the required 40 hours of training is a prerequisite for conversion to a career or career-conditional appointment. Virtual University, maintains oversight of all training and professional development for USDA Pathways participants. USDA Agencies and Staff Offices may require Recent Graduates to take additional training. However, the additional training must not interfere with the required 40 hours of training outlined in the USDA Pathways Programs Training Plan. USDA Agencies and Staff Offices may use their training authority in 5 U.S.C. Chapter 41 and 5 CFR, part 410 to pay all or part of the students training expenses.

9.10b – Conversion from Recent Graduate Program to Permanent Appointment

1. Recent Graduates who satisfactorily complete the USDA Recent Graduates Program and meet all eligibility requirements for conversion as outlined in 5 CFR 362.305 may be non-competitively converted to a term or permanent appointment in the competitive service under 5 CFR 315.713(b). Recent Graduates converted to term appointments may later be non-competitively converted to a permanent competitive service position. The conversion can not be to a position that has a career ladder, unless it was identified in the original vacancy announcement. Program requirements include:

- a. Must be a U.S. citizen prior to conversion (See section [9.1c](#));

- b. Successfully completed all the requirements of the USDA Recent Graduates Program;
- c. Demonstrated successful job performance consistent with the applicable performance appraisal program established under the agency's approved performance appraisal system that results in a rating of record (or summary rating) of at least Fully Successful or equivalent and a recommendation for conversion by the first-level supervisor; and
- d. Met the OPM qualification standard for the competitive service position to which the Recent Graduate will be converted.

2. All USDA Recent Graduates may be converted to a permanent position (or, in some limited circumstances, to a term position lasting 1-4 years). An agency must make the noncompetitive conversion effective on the date the service requirement is met, or at the end of an agency-approved extension, if applicable. (See section 11, [Exhibit 12](#)). Placement in the program confers no right to conversion to a career conditional appointment. To be eligible for conversion, Recent Graduates must:

- Meet the qualification standards for the position to which the Recent Graduate will be converted;
- Have at least 1-year of continuous work experience;
- Receive a satisfactory recommendation by his/her mentor;
- Meet training requirements as specified in the USDA Pathways Programs Training Plan; and
- Perform their job successfully and satisfactorily

9.10c – Probationary Period

A Recent Graduate converted to a full-time career or career-conditional position in the competitive service does not have to serve a probationary period and acquires competitive status immediately upon conversion.

9.10d – Tenure upon Conversion

Time spent serving as a Recent Graduate counts towards career tenure when the individual is non-competitively converted to a permanent position in the competitive service upon completion of the USDA Recent Graduates Program.

9.11 – EXTENSIONS IN PROGRAM

9.11a – Extension of Appointment in Recent Graduates Program

USDA Agencies and Staff Offices may extend the 1-year program period for up to an additional 120 days to cover rare or unusual circumstances or situations. A request for extension must be sent to the Mission Area Human Resources Directors (MAHRD), within 45 days of the request using the established USDA Pathways Programs Extension Request Form. See section 11, [Exhibit 14](#) for a copy of the Extension Request Form. See 5 CFR 362.303.

9.12 – MOVEMENT BETWEEN AGENCIES

9.12a – Movement between Agencies

1. Recent Graduates may apply for and accept a new Recent Graduates appointment with another USDA Agency or Staff Office or another Federal agency, as long as the agency meets all the requirements for participation in the Pathways Program. (See 5 CFR 362.304).
2. To move to the new agency, the Recent Graduate must separate from the current employing agency.
3. The new employing agency must appoint the Recent Graduate without a break in service.
4. Time served under the USDA Recent Graduates Program is credited toward the 1-year requirement for non-competitive conversion eligibility to the competitive service. Because there is no break in service, the Recent Graduate does not begin a new period in the Program upon moving to the new agency.
5. If USDA accepts a Recent Graduate from another Federal agency, the Agency or Staff Office must identify requirements for Program completion and eligibility for non-competitive conversion.

9.13 – STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT AND AGREEMENT

9.13a – Student Loan Repayment and Agreement

1. Student loan repayment is not an entitlement. The repayments may be all or part of any outstanding federally insured student loan or loans previously taken out by a candidate who has been appointed to a job or to retain a current employee of the agency.
2. Before any loan repayments may be made an employee must sign a written agreement to complete a specified period of employment with the agency and to reimburse the agency for loan repayment benefits if the employee is separated involuntarily due to misconduct or failure to maintain an acceptable level of performance, employee leaves the agency voluntarily or violates any other condition of the agreement. This agreement may also specify any other employment conditions the agency considers to be appropriate. See section 11, [Exhibit 05](#) for a sample service agreement.

9.14 – TRAINING AND TUITION/ACADEMIC DEGREE REIMBURSEMENT AND SERVICE AGREEMENT

9.14a – Training Reimbursement

1. USDA Agencies and Staff Offices may pay all or part of the Recent Graduate's training expenses directly related to the Recent Graduate's official duties. Organization policy must be documented and shall be consistently applied with regard to training expenses for all eligible Recent Graduates within the Agency or Staff Office.

2. If a Recent Graduate receives financial assistance, the employing Agency or Staff office must complete a Form SF-182, Request, Authorization, Agreement and Certification of Training, to document the training and funds expended.

9.14b – Tuition/Academic Degree Reimbursement and Service Agreement

1. Recent Graduates are eligible for tuition/academic degree training reimbursement (5 CFR 410.308). When a USDA Agency or Staff Office pays a Recent Graduate's tuition and related college expenses, the Recent Graduate will be required to sign an agreement to commit to work for a specified period of time as per the agreement.

2. Service agreements must be completed, and signed by the Recent Graduate for each school term that the Recent Graduate receives financial assistance from the Agency/Staff Office. The employee's supervisor and servicing Human Resources Office are responsible for tracking and monitoring the agreement form and ensuring that the Recent Graduate completes the conditions of the agreement. A copy of the agreement must be maintained in the employee's Official Personnel Folder (OPF). See section 11, [Exhibit 04](#) for a sample service agreement (5 CFR 410.309).

3. Upon satisfactory completion of the Recent Graduates Program, the Agency/Staff Office may offer the Recent Graduate either a term, permanent career or a career-conditional appointment.

a. If a Recent Graduate is unwilling to accept the offer of either a term, permanent career or a career-conditional appointment, the Recent Graduate shall be responsible for repayment of all tuition and related college expenses received as per the agreement.

b. The payment agreed to under this section may not be required of a Recent Graduate who leaves the service of USDA to enter into the service of another agency in any branch of the Government, unless it is specified otherwise in the agreement (See section 11, [Exhibit 04](#)) and (5 U.S.C. 4108b).

9.15 – PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND AWARDS

9.15a – Performance Appraisal

1. For all Recent Graduate appointments, standards and measures must be established and acknowledged to within 30 days of employment. The Recent Graduate must be on a performance plan for 90 days, before a performance rating may be prepared. (See USDA DR 4040-430, Performance Management).

2. Supervisors shall establish performance standards and conduct performance evaluations for Recent Graduates in accordance with USDA DR 4040-430, Performance Management and Agency/Staff Office requirements in order to:

a. Identify the expectations to include how the employee will be measured.

b. Provide regular feedback to the employee regarding how they are meeting or not meeting expectations.

c. Identify opportunities for professional development.

3. Standards and elements must be developed. Performance appraisals should document both positive and negative consequences of the Recent Graduate's performance.

9.15b – Awards

Recent Graduates are eligible for awards and recognition in compliance with the USDA Guide for Employee Recognition.

9.16 – PROMOTIONS AND WITHIN-GRADE INCREASES (WGI)

9.16a – Promotions

1. Promotions will be made in accordance with OPM Regulations and guidance.

2. Recent Graduates are eligible for a non-competitive career ladder promotion upon recommendation from supervisor, meeting qualification standards and other eligibility requirements, as appropriate. The career ladder had to be identified in the original vacancy announcement that the Recent Graduate was selected from. Time-in-grade restrictions apply only to competitive service positions; therefore, time-in-grade does not apply to Recent Graduate appointments. However 1 year of specialized experience at the next lower grade level applies.

9.16b – General Schedule Within-Grade Increases (WGIs)

1. WGIs apply only to GS employees occupying permanent positions. "Permanent position" is defined in 5 CFR 531.403 as a position filled by an employee whose appointment is not designated as temporary and does not have a definite time limitation of 1 year or less. "Permanent position" includes a position to which an employee is promoted on a temporary or term basis for at least 1 year. The term does not include a position filled by an employee whose appointment is limited to 1 year or less and subsequently extended so that the total time of the appointment exceeds 1 year.

2. Recent Graduates are eligible for WGIs. The Recent Graduate will be automatically advanced to the next higher rate of grade at the beginning of the first applicable pay period following completion of the required waiting period, provided their performance in his or her position is satisfactory and not received an equivalent increase in pay during his or her waiting period. The Recent Graduate's performance is satisfactory when he/she achieves or maintains a performance rating of satisfactory or better.

9.16c – Wage Grade Within-Grade Increases (WGIs)

Recent Graduates appointed to Wage Grade positions are eligible for within-grade increases.

9.17 – DETAILS

9.17a – Details for Recent Graduates

Although it is not recommended, Recent Graduates may be detailed to other positions within the competitive service. See 5 CFR, Section 300.301(b) and 5 U.S.C. 3341.

9.18 – REDUCTION-IN-FORCE (RIF)

9.18a – Reduction-in-Force

Recent Graduates are covered by 5 CFR, part 351 for purposes of RIF. Recent Graduates are in excepted service Tenure Group II for purposes of 5 CFR 362.306.

9.19 – TERMINATIONS

9.19a – Termination for other reasons not related to Performance or Conduct

1. The appointment of a Recent Graduate who is not converted to a career or career-conditional appointment automatically expires at the end of the program period, or upon expiration of the USDA Pathways Programs Officer's approved extension, if applicable. Recent Graduates who are not converted at the end of the program period, unless an extension of 120 days (See section 11, [Exhibit 14](#)) has been granted as outlined in section [9.11a](#). See 5 CFR 362.303.

3. Recent Graduates are afforded the same retention rights as excepted service employees and may qualify for severance pay if involuntarily separated under 5 CFR, part 550, Subpart G.

9.19b – Termination for Failure to Meet Physical Requirements

Recent Graduates failing to continue to meet physical requirements, if applicable, may be terminated in accordance with 5 CFR, part 339.

9.19c – Termination for Performance or Conduct

1. Recent Graduates may be terminated for reasons related to misconduct, poor performance, or suitability.

2. Supervisors should contact their servicing Human Resources Management Office immediately for advice and assistance if performance or conduct problems occur with Recent Graduates. Whenever a Recent Graduate is discharged due to poor conduct or performance, officials must prepare adequate documentation outlining the facts leading to discharge and all counseling efforts made prior to discharge.

3. If separated due to poor performance or conduct, Recent Graduates employed under the USDA Recent Graduates Program generally have no procedural or appeal rights; however, there are two exceptions:

a. Recent Graduates who are preference eligible and who have completed one year of current continuous service in the same or similar position(s) are entitled to procedural rights under 5 CFR part 432 (unacceptable performance) or 5 CFR part 752 (misconduct). Recent Graduates covered under a bargaining unit are subject to applicable provisions of their negotiated collective bargaining agreements. In addition, they have the right to appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board.

b. Non-preference eligible Recent Graduates who have completed two years of current continuous employment in the same or similar position(s) are entitled to the procedural rights but not the appeal rights under 5 CFR part 432.

9.20 – PERSONNEL CEILINGS AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

9.20a – Personnel Ceilings

Recent Graduates in the USDA Pathways Program count against full-time equivalent (FTE) ceilings, pursuant to Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Bulletin 93-03, March 4, 1993.

9.20b – Reporting Requirements

USDA periodically requires USDA Agencies and Staff Offices to report USDA Pathways Programs hiring data.

10 – PRESIDENTIAL MANAGEMENT FELLOWS (PMF) PROGRAM

10.1 – ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

10.1a – Program Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for the PMF Program, applicants must meet requirements set out in 5 CFR 213.3402 (c). Individuals who completed an advanced degree from a qualifying educational institution within the 2 years, preceding the OPM Program announcement described in paragraph [10.2c](#) or who are scheduled to complete an advanced degree prior to the date that PMF finalists are announced, are eligible to apply for the Program. An individual may apply for the PMF Program more than once as long as he/she meets the eligibility criteria. However, if an individual becomes a finalist and subsequently applies for the Program during the next open announcement, the individual will forfeit his or her status as a finalist.

10.1b – Age and Employment of Minors

Participation in the PMF Program must be in conformance with Federal, State, or local laws and standards governing the employment of minors. All USDA PMFs must be at least 16 years of age at the time of their appointment. Check with the State employment office for information on any hazardous occupation restrictions for employees under the age of 18.

10.1c – Citizenship

Non-citizens may be appointed to PMF positions in accordance with the requirements in 5 CFR 362.105e, provided that:

- a. The PMF is lawfully admitted to the United States as a permanent resident or is otherwise authorized to be employed.
- b. The agency is authorized to pay certain aliens as provided in the annual Appropriations Act ban and any agency-specific enabling and appropriation statutes.
- c. PMFs must be U.S. citizens to be eligible for non-competitive conversion to the competitive service.
- d. Follow this link for guidance from OPM:
https://help.usajobs.gov/index.php/Employment_of_Non-citizens
- e. Follow this link for guidance from USDA:
<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/EmployForeignNationals/index.htm>

10.1d – Driver's License

PMFs who are required to operate a government vehicle must have a valid State issued driver's license or an agency identification card indicating the type of vehicle or equipment the holder is authorized to drive or operate.

10.1e – Drug and Alcohol Testing

1. Executive Order 12564 of 1986 established the goal of a drug-free Federal workplace and makes it a condition of employment for all Federal employees to refrain from using illegal drugs on or off-duty. This Executive Order also contains the criteria for identifying testing-designated positions.
2. Under the Omnibus Transportation Employee Testing Act of 1991 (49 U.S.C sec. 2717), employees whose work requires them to have a commercial driver's license must be included in a drug and alcohol testing program. Additional requirements are in USDA DR-4430-792-2, Drug-free Workplace Program and FSH 6109.41.
3. In compliance with the Federal and Department requirements, employees who are paid by the National Finance Center and who either are in a testing designated position or have a job-related commercial driver's license are subject to random drug and/or alcohol testing requirements. PMFs meeting these criteria must also be drug tested, and the test must produce negative results before the applicant may be hired.
4. In compliance with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Drug-Free Workplace Program authorities, all employees are subject to drug testing based on reasonable suspicion and in post-

accident situations. Only the Human Resources Management Directors or their acting's, have the authority to make findings of reasonable suspicion of drug use for PMF's.

10.1f – Employment of Relatives

PMFs may work at USDA with a relative when there is no direct reporting relationship and the relative is not in a position to influence or control the student's appointment, employment, promotion, or advancement within the agency. See 5 CFR 362.105(f).

10.1g – Physical Fitness

Tentative job offers may be made contingent upon an individual passing any physical fitness test established for the position (5 CFR part 339, Subpart C), if applicable. Requirements must be clearly documented in the position description (5 CFR 339.203). Failure to meet the physical requirements for the position means that the PMF is not qualified for the position unless a waiver or reasonable accommodation is indicated (5 CFR 339.102). When there are physical fitness requirements for positions, the requirements and consequences for failing to meet them during the appointment should be addressed in the USDA Pathways Programs Participant Agreement. (See section 11, [Exhibit 10](#)).

10.2 – RECRUITMENT REQUIREMENTS

10.2a – Recruitment Planning

All USDA PMFs will be recruited from OPM's list of PMF Finalists.

10.2b – Position Classification

The Agency is responsible for classifying all PMF position descriptions. The grade level is set according to criteria in the appropriate General Schedule or Federal Wage System classification standard.

10.2c – Vacancy Announcements

OPM will announce the opportunity to apply for the PMF Program and conduct a competition for the selection of finalists. OPM will select Fellow finalists based on an OPM evaluation of each candidate's experience and accomplishments based on his or her application and the results of a rigorous structured assessment process. USDA will select all USDA PMFs from OPM's list of finalists.

10.2d – Recruitment Incentives

In accordance with 5 CFR, part 575, recruitment incentives are authorized and may be utilized for hard-to-fill positions.

10.3 – QUALIFICATIONS

10.3a – Qualification Requirements

OPM will select PMF finalists based on an OPM evaluation of each candidate's experience and accomplishments based on his or her application and the results of a rigorous structured assessment process. The agency is responsible for verifying qualifications and eligibility upon appointment.

10.3b – Superior Qualifications

The agency will determine if PMFs meet the superior qualifications standards.

10.3c – Suitability Determinations

When issues of suitability and security arise, they should be addressed by employment officers (5 CFR, part 731, subpart B).

10.3d – Veteran's Preference

Veteran's preference applies in the arrangement of qualified applicants for all USDA Pathways Programs positions (5 CFR 302.101(a)).

10.3e – Written Tests

There are no written test requirements for entry or conversion to term or career or career-conditional positions within the PMF Program.

10.4 – APPOINTMENTS

10.4a – Equal Employment Opportunity

Appointments are subject to all laws, regulations, and policies governing equal employment opportunity.

10.4b – Program Appointment Requirements

1. Appointments to the USDA PMF Program, are made in accordance with the Schedule D excepted service appointing authority provided in 5 CFR 213.3402(c). Appointments are subject to all the requirements and conditions governing term, career, or career-conditional employment, including investigation to establish an appointee's qualifications and suitability.

a. PMFs are appointed for an initial period of 2 years. The first 2 years of a Fellow's appointment is a trial period.

b. A PMF may be appointed at any time during the 12-month period beginning on the date OPM publishes the list of Fellows finalists.

c. PMF appointments may be made at the GS-09, GS-11, or GS-12 level or equivalent depending on his or her qualifications.

2. Follow procedures for coding personnel actions in the Office of Personnel Management's Guide to Processing Personnel Actions, Chapter 11.

3. There is no limit on the number of times a participant may be appointed to a position, as long as the applicant meets eligibility requirements for the appointment.

10.4c – Appointment Documentation

The following documentation is required for the appointment of PMFs:

a. Application and resume from USAJOBS;

b. OF-306, Declaration of Federal Employment;

c. Evidence of citizenship;

d. Official transcripts;

e. Proof of veteran's preference (DD-214 Member 4 Copy), and if applicable, SF-15, "Application for 10-point veterans' preference, plus the proof required by that form (e.g. VA Letter).

10.4d – Tenure upon Appointment

PMFs are appointed to Tenure Group II for purposes of 5 CFR 315. 201 and afforded the same retention rights as other excepted service employees.

10.4e – USDA Pathways Programs Participant Agreement

USDA Pathways Programs Participant Agreements must be completed before the PMFs entrance-on duty date (EOD) and signed by the participant. The agreement must describe the general description of duties; evaluation procedures that will be used for the participant; requirements for continuation and successful completion of the program; work schedules; minimum eligibility requirements for non-competitive conversion to term or permanent competitive service employment according to the requirements of the applicable Pathways Program; and the length of the appointment and termination date. See section 11, [Exhibit 10](#) for a sample PMF Agreement (5 CFR 362.104).

10.4f– Work Schedules/Telework

1. An intermittent schedule is prohibited for PMFs. A PMF may work a full-time or part-time schedule. Supervisors are responsible for establishing a work schedule for a PMF in accordance with 5 CFR 610.121. Supervisors and PMFs should agree on a formally arranged schedule. See section 11, [Exhibit 10](#).

2. PMFs may or may not be eligible for telework. For more information on Telework, visit this link for USDA DR-4080-811-002:

<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2012/DR4080-811-002.pdf>

10.4g – Trial Period upon Initial Appointment

The duration of the PMF's appointment in the excepted service is the trial period. Prior Federal civilian service is credited toward the completion of the required trial period in the same manner as prescribed in 5 CFR 315.802.

10.4h – Pay Advances

The Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act of 1990 permits advance payment of basic pay for up to two pay periods to any individual who is newly appointed to a position (DPM, Bulletin 550-97; see section 11, [Exhibit 02](#) for further instructions).

10.4i – Service Credit for Annual Leave

PMFs are eligible for Service Credit for Annual Leave. See 5 CFR 630.205, for further guidance.

10.4j – Bargaining Unit Status

PMFs may be placed in a bargaining unit position and, if so, are included in the Local bargaining unit (BU). Orientations for student trainees identified as eligible bargaining unit employees will include any negotiated orientation requirements outlined in the applicable collective bargaining agreements. Check with your HR Practitioner or Labor Relations staff for a determination on whether or not the position is a bargaining or non-bargaining position.

10.5 – PAYMENT OF TRAVEL, TRANSPORTATION, AND TRANSFER OF STATION (TOS)

10.5a – Travel and Transportation Expenses – Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel

1. Travel payments and reimbursements are subject to Agency/Mission Area regulations. All travel authorizations, arrangements, and vouchers must be filed in the official electronic travel system. Units will ensure that all appropriate travel forms are completed in advance of travel and vouchers are filed within five days of returning from travel. PMFs must be made aware, in advance of travel, of what will and will not be reimbursed. Failure to comply with regulations may result in a debt due the government and the Student Trainee may be issued a bill for collection.

2. PMFs may or may not be eligible to apply for a government-issued travel charge card.

3. PMFs may apply for a travel advance for TDY expenses.

4. Authorizing officials will pay travel and transportation expenses related to mandatory training, such as travel and transportation between duty station and training location, for participants only.

5. For more information, please contact your Agency/Mission Area Budget and Finance Office.

10.5b – Transfer of Station (TOS)

1. PMFs are eligible for relocation expenses. For further guidance see Federal Travel Regulation (FTR), 5 U.S.C. 5723 and USDA DR 2300-002.

2. In accordance with Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) 302-2.6 (a), the new official station must be at least 50 miles further from the employee's current residence than the old official station is from the same residence. However, at the discretion of Agency Heads, exceptions may be made for extenuating circumstances that must be approved in writing by the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO). See FTR 302-2.6 (b) and USDA DR 2300-002 5k.

10.6 – ON-BOARDING

10.6a – On-Boarding

1. USDA Directive 4720-001, USDA On-boarding Requirements, requires responsible stewardship of resources and accountability for the strategic management of human resources, including the successful acclimation of new employees into the workplace. To achieve this goal, USDA has established a uniform framework for orienting new employees to the workplace.

2. A central Web page, for use by all agencies, containing important information for supervisors, sponsors, and new employees regarding the on-boarding process, can be accessed at: <http://www.dm.usda.gov/OBP>

10.6b – Supervisor's On-Boarding Checklist

See section 11, [Exhibit 03](#).

10.7 – ORIENTATION

10.7a – Orientation

1. OPM will provide an orientation program for each class or cohort of Fellows and will provide information on available training opportunities.

2. It is the responsibility of each Agency/Staff Office to ensure that each PMF receives orientation. The PMF should be provided additional orientation in accordance with the service agreement in section 11, [Exhibit 10](#) and applicable collective bargaining agreements.

10.8 – INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (IDP)/MENTORING

10.8a – Individual Development Plans

1. Ensure within 45 days of appointment, that each PMF has an Individual Development Plan (IDP) that is approved by his or her supervisor; and provide at least 80 hours of formal interactive training per year that advances the goals and competencies outlined in each PMF's IDP. Mandatory annual training, such as information security and ethics training, does not count towards the 40-hour requirement. See section 11, [Exhibit 13](#), USDA Pathways PMF Program Training and Development Plan for a list of required training.

2. The supervisor and employee meet annually to update the employee's IDP – typically at the same time the employee is placed on a performance plan – but can be adjusted as necessary throughout the year to address changing requirements and needs. The IDP process also provides an opportunity for the employee to share with the supervisor his/her goals and communicate his/her strengths and developmental needs. Employees' IDP should be updated to address any training needs required to execute their duties at the full performance level of their current job and/or to address developmental needs as agreed upon between the supervisor and employee.

3. AgLearn has a wide variety of on-line courses and can be accessed at:
<http://www.aglearn.usda.gov/>

10.8b – PMF Mentorship

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that a Mentor is assigned to the PMF, within 90 days of appointment. The Mentor should be someone from the appropriate level that is outside his or her chain of command. See section 11, [Exhibit 16](#) for a sample Mentoring Partnership Agreement.

10.9 – BENEFITS

10.9a – PMF Benefits

1. Annual and sick leave when in pay status. The amount of leave earned is the same as for permanent employees.

2. Promotions are made in accordance with the USDA DR and in this Handbook.

3. Within-grade pay increases when they perform at the successful level. The waiting periods are the same as for permanent employees (see section [10.16b](#)).

4. Coverage under the Federal Employees' Health Benefits (FEHB) and Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) programs are authorized.

5. Participation in the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) and the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) unless otherwise eligible for Civil Service Retirement System or CSRS Offset. PMFs covered under any of the three retirement systems, are eligible to participate in the TSP.

10.10 – CONVERSIONS

10.10a – Training Requirements

1. Supervisors must provide each PMF a minimum of 80 hours of interactive training per year, for 2 years, that addresses the competencies outlined in the IDP.

2. Supervisors must provide each PMF with at least one rotational or developmental assignment with full-time management and/or technical responsibilities consistent with the Fellow's IDP. With respect to the following requirements:

a. Each PMF must receive at least one developmental assignment of 4 to 6 months in duration, with management and/or technical responsibilities consistent with the PMFs IDP. However, as an alternative, a PMF may choose to participate in an agency-wide initiative or other Presidential or Administration initiative that will provide the PMF with the experience that would have gained through the 4-to-6-month developmental assignment.

b. The developmental assignment may be within the PMFs organization, in another component of the agency, or in another Federal agency.

3. In addition, the PMF may receive other short-term rotational assignments of 1 to 6 months in duration, at the appointing agency's discretion.

4. Upon the request of OPM, USDA Agencies and Staff Offices must make PMFs available to assist in the assessment process for subsequent PMF classes. This may require travel on the part of the PMF to be paid for by the appointing Agency or Staff Office.

5. Supervisors must ensure that an annual Individual Development Plan (IDP) is completed by the PMF.

6. PMFs must complete 160 hours of mandatory AgLearn Training, 80 hours of training per year for 2 years. Training and development is imperative to the success of each USDA Pathways Programs participant. Therefore, all USDA Agencies and Staff Offices will ensure that PMFs complete the required training as outlined in the USDA Pathways Programs Training Plan. The required courses will be taken in AgLearn. Completion of the required 160 hours of training is a prerequisite for conversion to a career or career-conditional appointment. Virtual University, maintains oversight of all training and professional development for USDA Pathways participants. USDA Agencies and Staff Offices may require PMFs to take additional training. However, the additional training must not interfere with the required 160 hours of training outlined in the USDA Pathways Programs Training Plan. USDA Agencies and Staff Offices may use their training authority in 5 U.S.C. Chapter 41 and 5 CFR, part 410 to pay all or part of the students training expenses.

10.10b – Certification of Program Completion

1. Prior to conversion the following certification requirements must be met:

a. Upon a PMF's completion of the Program, the appointing Agency's/Staff Office's Executive Resources Board (ERB) must evaluate each PMF and determine whether it can certify in writing that participant has met all of the requirements of the Program, including the performance and developmental expectations set forth in the individual's performance plan and IDP.

b. The ERB may consult the PMF's mentor in reaching its determination.

c. In the event the Director has approved a waiver of one or more Program requirements in a particular case pursuant to 5 CFR 362.108, the ERB must certify that such a waiver has been granted and that any remaining requirements were met.

d. The ERB must notify the PMF of its decision regarding certification of successful completion.

e. ERB certifications must be forwarded to OPM.

f. If the ERB decides not to certify a PMF, the Fellow may request reconsideration of that determination by the Director. Such reconsideration must be requested in writing, with appropriate documentation and justification, within 15 calendar days of the date of the agency's decision. The Director's decision on reconsideration is not subject to appeal.

10.10c – Conversion from PMF to Permanent Appointment

1. A PMF who is a U.S. citizen (See section [10.1c](#)) may be non-competitively converted from the PMF Program to a term or permanent position in the competitive service when the PMF has:

a. Successfully completed all the requirements of the USDA PMF Program;

b. Demonstrated successful job performance consistent with the applicable performance appraisal program established under the agency's approved performance appraisal system that results in a rating of record (or summary rating) of at least Fully Successful or equivalent and a recommendation for conversion by the first-level supervisor; and

c. Meet the OPM qualification standard for the competitive service position to which the PMF will be converted.

2. A PMF must complete the USDA PMF Program within 2-years or up to an additional 120 days on an approved extension by the USDA Pathways Programs Officer.

3. As provided in 5 CFR 315.713(c), USDA Agencies and Staff Offices may convert, without a break in service, an ERB certified PMF to a term or permanent appointment in the competitive service.

4. PMFs who are non-competitively converted to a competitive service term appointment may be subsequently converted non-competitively to a permanent competitive service position.

5. Non-competitive conversion may be to a position within the same agency or any other agency within the Federal Government.

6. The provisions of the career transition assistance programs in 5 CFR part 330, Subparts B, F, and G do not apply to conversions made under this part.

7. A PMF appointment expires at the end of their 2 year initial appointment. Although PMF's are eligible for non-competitive conversion to the competitive service upon successful completion of their program requirements and any other applicable conversion requirements, service in the USDA PMF Program confers no right to further employment in either the competitive or excepted service.

8. There may be rare cases in which the PMF is not converted to a permanent career or career conditional appointment. These rare cases may involve budget restrictions/shortfalls or the PMFs conduct, performance, personal illness, or hardship.

10.10d – Probationary Period

A PMF converted to a full-time career or career-conditional position in the competitive service under this section does not have to serve a probationary period and acquires competitive status immediately upon conversion.

10.10e – Tenure upon Conversion

1. Time spent serving as a PMF counts towards career tenure when the PMF is non-competitively converted to a permanent position in the competitive service upon completion of the Program.

2. PMFs whose appointment is converted, becomes a career-conditional employee when he/she completes the service requirements for career tenure or is excepted from it by 5 CFR 315.201(c).

10.11 – EXTENSIONS

10.11a – Extension of Appointment in PMF Program

A PMF appointment may be extended up to 120 days to cover rare and unusual circumstances or situations. Extension requests for PMFs must be sent to the ERB, within 45-days of the request using the USDA Pathways Programs Extension Request Form. See section 11, [Exhibit 15](#) for a copy of the Extension Request Form. See 5 CFR 362.404.

10.12 – MOVEMENT BETWEEN AGENCIES

10.12a – Movement between Agencies

1. PMFs may apply for and accept a new PMF appointment with another Federal agency or USDA Agency or Staff Office, as long as the agency meets all the requirements for participation in the USDA PMF Program. (See 5 CFR 362.304 Movement between agencies).

2. To move to the new agency, the PMF must separate from the current employing agency.

3. The new employing agency must appoint the PMF without a break in service.

4. Time served under the previous agency's PMF Program is credited toward the 2-year requirement for non-competitive conversion eligibility to the competitive service. Because there is no break in service, the PMF does not begin a new period in the Program upon moving to the new agency.

10.13 – STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT AND AGREEMENT

10.13a – Student Loan Repayment and Agreement

1. The repayments may be all or part of any outstanding federally insured student loan or loans previously taken out by the PMF who has been appointed to an internship or to retain a PMF. Student loan repayment is not an entitlement.

2. Before any loan repayments may be made, PMF's must sign a written agreement to complete a specified period of employment in the Agency/Staff Office and to reimburse the Agency/Staff Office for loan repayment benefits if the PMF is separated involuntarily due to misconduct or failure to maintain an acceptable level of performance, leaves the Agency/Staff Office voluntarily or violates any other condition of the agreement. The agreement may also specify any other employment conditions the Agency/Staff Office considers to be appropriate, such as, but not limited to, the PMFs position and the duties expected to perform, work schedule, or level of performance. See section 11, [Exhibit 05](#) for a sample service agreement.

10.14 – TRAINING AND TUITION/ACADEMIC DEGREE REIMBURSEMENT AND SERVICE AGREEMENT

10.14a – Training Reimbursement

1. USDA Agencies and Staff Offices may pay all or part of the PMFs training expenses directly related to the PMFs official duties (5 CFR 213.3202). A written policy must be documented and shall be consistently applied with regard to training expenses for all eligible PMFs in the Agency/Staff Office.

2. If a PMF receives financial assistance, the employing Agency/Staff Office must complete a Form SF-182, Request, Authorization, Agreement and Certification of Training, to document the training and funds expended.

10.14b – Tuition/Academic Degree Reimbursement and Service Agreement

1. PMFs are eligible for tuition/academic degree training reimbursement (5 CFR 410.308). When USDA pays a PMFs tuition and related college expenses, such as in the agency's Multicultural Workforce Strategic Initiatives, the PMF will be required to sign an agreement to commit to work for a specified period of time as per the agreement.

2. Service agreements must be completed, and signed by the PMF for each school term that the PMF receives financial assistance from the Agency/Staff Office. The PMFs supervisor and servicing Human Resources Office are responsible for tracking and monitoring the agreement form and ensuring that the PMF completes the conditions of the agreement. A copy of the agreement must be maintained in the employee's Official Personnel Folder (OPF). See section 11, [Exhibit 04](#) for a sample service agreement (5 CFR 410.309).

3. Upon satisfactory completion of the PMF Program, the Agency/Staff Office may offer the PMF either a term, permanent career or a career-conditional appointment.

a. If a PMF is unwilling to accept the offer of either a term, permanent career or a career-conditional appointment, the PMF shall be responsible for repayment of all tuition and related college expenses received as per the agreement.

b. The payment agreed to under this section may not be required of a PMF who leaves the service of USDA to enter into the service of another agency in any branch of the Government, unless it is specified otherwise in the agreement (See section 11, [Exhibit 04](#)) and (5 U.S.C. 4108b).

10.15 – PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND AWARDS

10.15a – Performance Appraisal

1. Each PMF must be placed on a performance plan, as prescribed by 5 CFR, part 430.

2. For all PMF appointments, performance standards and measures must be established and acknowledged to within 30 days of employment. The employee must be on a performance plan for 90 days, before a performance rating may be prepared. (See USDA DR 4040-430, Performance Management).

3. Supervisors shall establish performance standards and conduct performance evaluations for PMF's and use the following measures:

a. Identify the expectations to include how the PMF will be measured.

b. Provide regular feedback to the PMF regarding how they are meeting or not meeting expectations.

c. Identify opportunities for professional development.

4. Performance appraisals should document both positive and negative consequences of the student's performance.

5. Each PMF must receive an annual performance evaluation in accordance with USDA DR 4040-430, Performance Management and the Agency's/Staff Office's performance management program. The rating is to include an evaluation of the PMFs success in completing developmental activities designed to prepare the PMF to meet the developmental and performance expectations described in his or her performance plan. In addition to the formal evaluation, the Agency/Staff Office is expected to provide regular feedback concerning the PMF's performance.

6. If a PMF fails to meet expectations set forth in the performance plan with regard to his or her developmental progress or assignments, the Agency/Staff Office may take appropriate action.

10.15b – Awards

PMFs are eligible for awards and recognition in compliance with the USDA Guide for Employee Recognition.

10.16 – PROMOTIONS AND WITHIN-GRADE INCREASES (WIG)

10.16a – Promotions

1. Promotions will be made in accordance with OPM Regulations and guidelines.
2. PMFs are eligible for a non-competitive career ladder promotion upon recommendation from supervisor, meeting qualification standards and other eligibility requirements, as appropriate. Time-in-grade restrictions apply only to competitive service positions; therefore, time-in-grade does not apply to PMF appointments. However 1 year of specialized experience at the next lower grade level applies.

10.16b – General Schedule Within-Grade Increases (WGIs)

1. WGIs apply only to GS employees occupying permanent positions. "Permanent position" is defined in 5 CFR 531.403 as a position filled by an employee whose appointment is not designated as temporary and does not have a definite time limitation of 1 year or less. "Permanent position" includes a position to which an employee is promoted on a temporary or term basis for at least 1 year. The term does not include a position filled by an employee whose appointment is limited to 1 year or less and subsequently extended so that the total time of the appointment exceeds 1 year.

2. PMFs are eligible for WGIs, since their initial appointment is for a 2 year period. PMF's will be automatically advanced to the next higher rate of the grade at the beginning of the first applicable pay period following completion of the required waiting period, provided their performance in the position is satisfactory and not received an equivalent increase in pay during

his or her waiting period. An employee's performance is satisfactory when he/she achieves or maintains a performance rating of satisfactory or better.

10.16c – Wage Grade Within-Grade Increases (WGI)

PMFs appointed to Wage Grade positions regardless of type of appointment, are entitled to within-grade increases. PMF's will be automatically advanced to the next higher rate of the grade at the beginning of the first applicable pay period following completion of the required waiting period, provided the performance in the position is satisfactory and had not received an equivalent increase in pay during the waiting period. A PMFs performance is satisfactory when achieves or maintains a performance rating of satisfactory or better.

10.17 – DETAILS

10.17a – Details for PMF's

PMFs may be detailed to other positions within the competitive service. See 5 CFR, Section 300.301(b) and 5 U.S.C. 3341.

10.18 –REDUCTION-IN-FORCE

10.18a – Reduction-in-Force

PMFs are covered by 5 CFR, part 351 for purposes of RIF. PMFs are in excepted service Tenure Group II for purposes of 5 CFR 32.502.

10.19 –TERMINATIONS

10.19a – Termination for other reasons not related to Performance or Conduct

1. The appointment of a PMF who is not converted to a term, career or career-conditional appointment automatically expires at the end of the program period. USDA Agencies/Staff Offices must terminate PMFs who are not converted at the end of the 2-year program period, unless an extension of no more than 120 days has been granted by the USDA Pathways Officer, as outlined in section [10.11a](#). See 5 CFR 362.303.

2. PMFs are afforded the same retention rights as excepted service employees and may qualify for severance pay if involuntarily separated under 5 CFR, part 550, Subpart G.

10.19b – Termination for Failure to Meet Physical Requirements

PMFs failing to continue to meet physical requirements may be terminated in accordance with 5 CFR, part 339.

10.19c – Termination for Performance or Conduct

1. USDA Agencies and Staff Offices may terminate a PMF for reasons related to misconduct, poor performance, or suitability.

2. Supervisors should contact their servicing Human Resources Management office immediately for advice and assistance if performance or conduct problems occur with PMFs. Whenever a PMF is discharged due to poor conduct or performance, USDA Officials must prepare adequate documentation outlining the facts leading to discharge and all counseling efforts made prior to discharge. If the issue is a performance issue, USDA Agencies and Staff Offices are encouraged to utilize a performance improvement period prior to removal of the PMF.

3. If separated due to poor performance or conduct, PMF's employed under the USDA Pathways Programs generally have no procedural or appeal rights; however, there are two exceptions:

a. PMFs who are preference eligible and who have completed one year of current continuous service in the same or similar position(s) are entitled to procedural rights under 5 CFR part 432 (unacceptable performance) or 5 CFR part 752 (misconduct). PMFs covered under a bargaining unit are subject to applicable provisions of their negotiated collective bargaining agreements. In addition, they have the right to appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board.

b. Non-preference eligible PMFs who have completed two years of current continuous employment in the same or similar position(s) are entitled to the procedural rights but not the appeal rights under 5 CFR, part 432.

10.20 – WITHDRAW/RESIGNATION/READMISSION

10.20a – Withdraw

1. A PMF may withdraw from the USDA PMF Program at any time. Such withdrawal will be treated as a resignation from the Federal service; however, any obligations established upon admission and appointment (for example, as a result of accepting a recruitment incentive under 5 CFR part 575, Subpart A) still apply. If the withdraw occurs within the first 6 months of the Fellow's appointment, USDA Agencies and Staff Offices may request reimbursement of one-quarter of the placement fee.

2. USDA Agencies and Staff Offices must notify The Provost, Virtual University in writing, within 30 days of the withdrawal, when a PMF withdraws from the USDA PMF Program.

10.20b – Resignation

A PMF who resigns at any time prior to completion of the USDA PMF Program does not have reinstatement eligibility for competitive service positions based on his or her appointment as a PMF.

10.20c – Readmission

If a PMF withdraws from the USDA PMF Program for reasons that are related to misconduct, poor performance, or suitability, as determined by the USDA Agency/Staff Office, the PMF will not be readmitted to the USDA PMF Program at any time.

10.21 – PERSONNEL CEILINGS AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

10.21a – Personnel Ceilings

PMFs in the USDA PMF Program count against full-time equivalent (FTE) ceilings, pursuant to Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Bulletin 93-03, March 4, 1993.

10.21b – Reporting Requirements

OHRM will periodically require USDA Agencies and Staff Offices to report USDA Pathway Programs, PMF hires.

11 – EXHIBITS

1. [Exhibit 01](#), Group Coverage Qualification Standard for Pathways Internship Positions.
2. [Exhibit 02](#), Attachment 1 to Chapter 550 - Pay Administration, Subchapter 13 - Advances in Pay.
3. [Exhibit 03](#), Supervisor's Checklist.
4. [Exhibit 04](#), Sample Service Agreement for Academic/Tuition Degree Assistance.
5. [Exhibit 05](#), Sample Service Agreement for Repayment of Student Loan(s).
6. [Exhibit 06](#), Sample Pathways Program, Intern Participant Agreement Form.
7. [Exhibit 07](#), Sample Pathways Program, Intern Break in Program Request Form.
8. [Exhibit 08](#), Sample Pathways Program, Intern NTE Extension Request Form.
9. [Exhibit 09](#), Sample Pathways Program, Recent Graduate Program Participant Agreement.
10. [Exhibit 10](#), Sample Pathways Program, Presidential Management Fellows Participant Agreement.
11. [Exhibit 11](#), USDA Pathways Intern Program Training and Development Plan.
12. [Exhibit 12](#), USDA Pathways Recent Graduates Program Training and Development Plan.
13. [Exhibit 13](#), USDA Pathways PMF Program Training and Development Plan.

14. [Exhibit 14](#), Recent Graduate and PMF Extension Request Form.
15. [Exhibit 15](#), Recent Graduate and PMF Extension Request Form.
16. [Exhibit 16](#), Mentoring Partnership Agreement.
17. [Exhibit 17](#), PMF Conversion to the Competitive Service Form
18. [Exhibit 18](#), Internship Program, Agency JOA Desk Aid
19. [Exhibit 19](#), Recent Graduate Program, Agency JOA Desk Aid
20. [Exhibit 20](#), Recruitment and Outreach Advertisement, Agency Posting Desk Aid

11 - Exhibit 01

**OPM Group Coverage Qualification Standard
for Schedule D, Pathways Internship Positions**

This standard describes the qualification requirements for Schedule D, Internship appointments under the Pathways Programs authorized by Executive Order 13562. Eligibility and selection requirements are described in 5 CFR part 362.

Agencies may either establish agency-specific qualification requirements or use this OPM qualification standard to hire Interns. However, Interns must meet the OPM qualification requirements of the target position before their conversion to a competitive service position.

This standard does not apply to student trainee appointments already in the competitive service since they are covered by the *Student Trainee Qualification Standard for Competitive Service Positions*.

REQUIREMENTS FOR INITIAL APPOINTMENT

Interns qualify for an initial appointment based on their educational achievements in accordance with subpart B of 5 CFR part 362 and the criteria in this standard. Applicants must be current students pursuing a degree or certificate in a qualifying educational institution (See 5 CFR 362.102). The initial appointment for an Intern position may be at any grade level for which the applicant qualifies in accordance with the criteria below.

GRADE	LEVEL OF EDUCATION
GS-1	Enrollment in a high school diploma or GED program.
GS-2	High school diploma or equivalent
GS-3	Completion of 1 full academic year of post-high school study
GS-4	Completion of 2 full academic years of post-high school study or associate's degree
GS-5	Completion of all requirements for a bachelor's degree or equivalent degree
GS-7	Completion of 1 full academic year of graduate level education or eligibility under the Superior Academic Achievement Provision after completing a bachelor's degree
GS-9	Completion of all requirements for a master's degree or equivalent degree
GS-11	For research positions, completion of all requirements for a master's or equivalent degree
	For non-research positions, completion of all requirements for a PhD or equivalent degree

11 - Exhibit 01--Continued

Agencies may use selective factors to identify special requirements (e.g., specific courses) needed to perform the work of individual positions.

PROMOTION REQUIREMENTS

At the agency's discretion and prior to conversion, Interns may advance to higher-graded positions based on completion of portions of the educational and work experience requirements in accordance with the criteria below.

Promotion pattern for one-grade interval occupations

To GS – 2. Continued study in a high school education program and completion of one period of student Intern work experience.

To GS – 3. Completion of one full semester (or the equivalent) of post-high school study and one period of student trainee work experience.

To GS – 4. Must meet one of the following requirements:

- Completion of one full academic year of study and two periods of student trainee work experience; or
- Completion of one and a half academic years of study and one period of student trainee work experience.

To GS – 5. Must meet one of the following requirements:

- Completion of 3 full academic years of study leading to a bachelor's degree and one period of Intern trainee work experience equivalent to at least the GS-4 level; or
- Completion of two and a half academic years of study leading to a bachelor's degree and 6 months (at least 960 hours) of Intern work experience equivalent to at least the GS-4 level.

To GS – 6. Completion of all requirements for a bachelor's degree and completion of one period of Intern work experience equivalent to at least the GS-5 level.

Promotion pattern for two-grade interval occupations

To GS – 5. Must meet one of the following requirements:

- Completion of 3 academic years of study leading to a bachelor's degree and one period of Intern trainee work experience equivalent to at least the GS-4 level; or

11 - Exhibit 01--Continued

- Completion of two and a half academic years of study leading to a bachelor's degree and 6 months (at least 960 hours) of Intern work experience equivalent to at least the GS-4 level.

To GS --7. Must meet one of the following requirements:

- Completion of all requirements for a bachelor's degree and completion of one period of Intern work experience equivalent to at least the GS-5 level; or
- Completion of 4 academic years of pre-professional study and completion of one period of Intern work experience equivalent to at least the GS-5 level.

To GS -- 9. Must meet one of the following requirements:

- Completion of 1 full year of graduate level study and completion of one period of Intern work experience equivalent to at least the GS-7 level; or
- Completion of 5 academic years of pre-professional* study and completion of one period of Intern work experience equivalent to at least the GS-7 level.

To GS -- 11. Completion of 2 full years of graduate level study and completion of one period of Intern work experience equivalent to the GS-9 level.

EXPLANATION OF TERMS

1. Academic year of undergraduate education:

- A minimum of 30 semester or 45 quarter hours at an accredited college or university; or
- A minimum of 36 weeks at an accredited business, technical, vocational, or qualifying educational institution for at least 20 classroom hours per week.

2. One period of Intern work experience: the equivalent of 2 months (320 hours).

3. Pre-professional study: academic study, credentialing, or training beyond the post-baccalaureate level that prepares the individual to practice a specific profession. Examples include Juris Doctor, Master of Science in Social Work, or Doctor of Pharmacy.

CONVERSION

Interns may be converted to a term, career-conditional or career appointment within 120 days following successful completion of all of their educational and work experience requirements. Prior to the noncompetitive conversion, the following conditions must be met:

- Compliance with all requirements specified by 5 CFR part 362;
- Eligibility for the target position based on OPM's qualification requirements, including any minimum educational, certification, or licensure requirements.

Interns converted at the same grade as their final Intern grade need not meet any length of experience requirements for that grade.

An agency may waive up to one-half (320 hours) of the 640-hour minimum service requirement for Interns who receive a formal job performance evaluation that is higher than Fully Successful and meet one of the following academic achievements:

- A grade point average of 3.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale;
- Class standing in the top 10 percent of the graduating class; or
- Induction into a scholastic honor society (excluding freshmen honor societies) recognized by the Association of College Honor Societies.

ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

A written test is not required for Schedule D Intern positions at the time of initial appointment or upon conversion.

OCCUPATIONAL COVERAGE

A list of the occupational series covered by this qualification standard is provided below.

[GS-099 General Student Trainee](#)

[GS-199 Social Science Student Trainee](#)

[GS-299 Personnel Management Student Trainee](#)

[GS-399 Administration and Office Support Student Trainee](#)

[GS-499 Biological Science Student Trainee](#)

[GS-599 Financial Management Student Trainee](#)

[GS-699 Medical and Health Student Trainee](#)

[GS-799 Veterinary Student Trainee](#)

11 - Exhibit 01--Continued

- [GS-899 Engineering and Architecture Student Trainee](#)
- [GS-999 Legal Occupations Student Trainee](#)
- [GS-1099 Information and Arts Student Trainee](#)
- [GS-1199 Business and Industry Student Trainee](#)
- [GS-1299 Copyright and Patent Student Trainee](#)
- [GS-1399 Physical Science Student Trainee](#)
- [GS-1499 Library and Archives Student Trainee](#)
- [GS-1599 Mathematics and Statistics Student Trainee](#)
- [GS-1699 Equipment and Facilities Management Student Trainee](#)
- [GS-1799 Education Student Trainee](#)
- [GS-1899 Investigation Student Trainee](#)
- [GS-1999 Quality Inspection Student Trainee](#)
- [GS-2099 Supply Student Trainee](#)
- [GS-2199 Transportation Student Trainee](#)
- [GS-2299 Information Technology Management Student Trainee](#)

This page can be found on the web at the following URL:

<http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/classification-qualifications/general-schedule-qualification-standards/>

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11 - Exhibit 02

**Attachment 1 to Department Personnel Manual (DPM) Bulletin 550-97
(DPM bull. 550-97)**

**Chapter 550 - Pay Administration
Subchapter 13 - Advances In Pay**

10-1 INTRODUCTION

A. POLICY. This authority is to be used to grant an advance in pay not to exceed pay for 2 pay periods to any individual who is newly appointed. This includes any individual who is appointed following a break in Federal service of at least 90 days. In making the decision to use this authority, USDA managers should consider whether or not its use is necessary to encourage the candidate to accept the position; the relative merits of the case by comparison to other cases in which the Agency has used the authority; and the impact of the decision on the advancement of USDA's equal employment opportunity objectives.

3. DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY. The authority to make advance payments of basic pay is delegated to the Agency Personnel Officers (APO's), who may redelegate it to lower levels of the organization consistent with the authority to make final firm offers of employment. APO's are responsible for ensuring judicious and equitable use of this authority.

10-2 CRITERIA FOR GRANTING/DENYING REQUESTS

Requests for an advance in pay must be submitted in writing. The following are examples of criteria on which the decision to grant or deny requests for advances in pay may be based:

- a. An indication of financial need;
- b. The recommendation by the selecting official;
- c. The difficulty encountered in filling the position;
- d. Whether it will be necessary for the individual concerned to move to a different city to accept the position and the cost of moving;
- e. Whether a recruitment bonus or relocation bonus would be more appropriate; or
- f. Budget constraints.

10-3 PROCESSING AND ACCOUNTING PROCEDURES GOVERNING ADVANCE PAYMENTS

A. STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING. Before an advance in pay may be processed, the employee must sign a statement of understanding (see Exhibit 07).

**Attachment 1 to Department Personnel Manual (DPM) Bulletin 550-97
(DPM bull. 550-97)**

B. PROCEDURES FOR PROCESSING ADVANCES IN PAY AND REPAYMENT. Within 3 workdays after the employee has entered on duty, the servicing Personnel Office (designated POI) should TELEFAX a copy of the statement of understanding along with a memorandum signed by the official with authority to approve an advance of pay containing the following information, to the National Finance Center (NFC), Payroll/Personnel Operations Section.

- (1) An identification that this is a request for an advance in pay;
- (2) The name and social security number of the employee for whom the advance in pay will be issued;
- (3) The amount of money to be advanced (agencies should follow the guidelines in exhibit 2 of chapter 13 of the Payroll/Personnel Processing Manual);
- (4) The pay period in which the employee enters on duty (Note: The check cannot be issued prior to the employee's entry on duty date, but must be issued prior to the issuance of his or her first paycheck);
- (5) The check mailing address;
- (6) The agency code and Personnel Office Identifier (POI);
- (7) The name, title, and agency of the official authorized to approve an advance in pay; and
- (8) The name and telephone number of the agency representative who can answer questions regarding the request.

Form AD-343 should be forwarded to NFC stating the amount of pay that was advanced as well as instructions on the number of pay periods over which the advance is to be recovered. The maximum period of time an agency may establish for recovery of an advance payment is 13 pay periods, beginning on the date of the employee's appointment, unless recovery is accomplished by salary offset procedures and a longer period is necessary to avoid exceeding the 15 percent of disposable pay limitation described in 5 CFR 2.104(i). Further instructions for processing advances in pay and repayment will be issued by the Office of Finance and Management in the Payroll/Personnel Processing Manual.

**Attachment 1 to Department Personnel Manual (DPM) Bulletin 550-97
(DPM bull. 550-97)**

10-4 WAIVING REPAYMENT OF ADVANCES IN PAY

A. DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY. The authority to waive all or part of an advance in pay is delegated to AGENCY HEADS or their designees.

B. CRITERIA FOR WAIVER. Before waiving all or part of an advance payment, the Agency Head or his or her designee should consider whether recovery would be against equity and good conscience or against the public interest.

10-5 RECORDS AND REPORTS

A. RECORDS. At a minimum, agencies must keep the following records for at least 2 years.

- (1) A justification for approving or denying the request for an advance in pay;
- (2) A copy of the statement of understanding; and
- (3) A copy of the justification for waiving repayment, if applicable.

B. REPORTS. Use of this authority will be evaluated as a part of the Department's personnel management evaluation program; however, reports on the use of this authority may be periodically required.

11 - Exhibit 03

Supervisor's On-Boarding Checklist

1. Welcome the Pathways Program Participant to your unit.
2. Schedule the employee for New Employee Orientation within 30 days of appointment.
3. Ensure that you complete the On-boarding process. Follow this link for on-boarding checklist. <http://www.dm.usda.gov/OBP>
4. Explain what type of appointment the employee is on. For example: You are being appointed to the Recent Graduate Program. After 1 year and upon completion of all program requirements, you may be eligible to be converted to a term, career or career conditional appointment.
5. Explain the requirements for continuation and successful completion of the Pathways Program.
6. Explain the requirements for non-competitive conversion to a term or permanent career or career conditional appointment, upon completion of Pathways Program requirements.
7. Present the employee with a copy of their Position Description and discuss the employee's duties and expectations with them.
8. Discuss and present the employee with a copy of their Performance Appraisal within 30 days of appointment to the position.
9. Discuss and assist the employee with completing an Individual Performance Plan (IDP) within 45 days of appointment.
10. Assign a Mentor to the employee within 90 days of appointment. See [Exhibit 16](#).
11. Discuss the employee's work schedule.
12. Ensure that the employee receives job related training as outlined in each component of the Pathways Programs. See sections [8.10a](#) and [Exhibit 11](#) (Interns); [9.10a](#) and [Exhibit 11](#) (Recent Graduates); and [10.10a](#) and [Exhibit 11](#) (PMFs).

**SERVICE AGREEMENT FOR
ACADEMIC/TUITION DEGREE ASSISTANCE**

In consideration of the Academic/Tuition Degree Assistance repayment benefit for which I qualify under 5 U.S.C. 4107, 5 U.S.C. 4108, 5 CFR 410.308 and 309, I hereby agree:

1. I agree that upon completion of the Government sponsored academic/tuition degree training, for which I am receiving assistance for, I will serve in the USDA three (3) times the length of the training period paid for by the Forest Service. The length of training is the number of class hours, using the educational standard (1 credit hour = 15 class hours), this may be different based on the institution's established contact hours. The obligated period of service will begin upon completion of the degree, license, or certification program. I understand that if I transfer to another USDA organization, this agreement will remain in effect until I have completed my obligated service.

2. I agree that if I do not remain with the USDA for the period of time agreed to under item 1 above, I will reimburse the Agency on a pro rata basis for the amount of the tuition and expenses related to the unexpired service. If I voluntarily leave the USDA before completing the period of service agreed to in item 1 above, I agree to reimburse the FS for the registration fees, tuition and matriculation fees, library and laboratory fees, purchase or rental of books, materials, supplies, travel, per diem, and miscellaneous other related training program costs (EXCLUDING salary) paid in connection with my training.

However, the amount of the reimbursement will be reduced on a pro rata basis for the percentage of completion of the obligated service. (For example, if the cost of training is \$900 and I complete two-thirds of the obligated service, I will reimburse the FS \$300 instead of the original \$900.)

3. I understand that any amount of money which may be due to the agency as a result of any failure on my part to meet the terms of this agreement may be withheld from any monies owed me by the Government, or may be recoverable from me as a debt due the United States Government.

4. I understand that I may not be responsible for reimbursement if I am separated for reasons beyond my control, such as rare cases that may involve reasons related to budget restrictions, personal illness, or hardship.

5. If I am no longer in good standing with my university, college, or other educational institution, I understand that I will be removed from the program and must repay the full amount of academic/tuition degree assistance (monies) received.

11 - Exhibit 04--Continued

6. That in the event I voluntarily leave the USDA, or in the event I am involuntarily separated for misconduct or performance before completing the agreed upon period of service, I will be indebted to the Federal Government and must reimburse the Government for the full amount of any academic/tuition degree assistance (monies) received under this service agreement. Note: Additional information about fees and expenses can be found in the Guide to Human Resource Reporting (GHRR).
<http://www.opm.gov/feddata/ghrr/index.asp>

7. I further agree to obtain approval from my organization and the person responsible for authorizing government training requests of any proposed change in my approved training program involving course and schedule changes, withdrawals or incompletions, and increased costs.

8. I acknowledge that this agreement does not in any way commit the USDA to continue my employment. I understand that if there is a transfer of my service obligation to another Federal agency within USDA, the agreements will remain in effect until I have completed my obligated service with that other agency or organization.

9. The service agreement is effective Month/Day/Year (date of completion of the degree, license, or certification program) through Month/Day/Year (three (3) times the length of the training period for by the Government).

I AGREE TO THE TERMS OF THIS SERVICE AGREEMENT:

Printed Name of Pathways Participant: _____

Employee's Signature: _____ Date: _____

cc: Pathways Program Coordinator
Copy to be filed in employee's e-OPF

11 - Exhibit 05

**USDA
SERVICE AGREEMENT FOR
REPAYMENT OF STUDENT LOAN(S)**

In consideration of the student loan repayment benefit for which I qualify under 5 U.S.C. 5379 as implemented by the regulations of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (5 CFR, Part 537), and USDA Directive 4050-537, I hereby agree:

1. I agree to serve in the USDA for 3 years (initial contract) or 1 year (extensions). I further agree that if I leave the USDA to accept a position with another Federal Government Agency, prior to completing this service agreement, I will be indebted to the Federal Government and must reimburse the USDA for the full amount of any student loan repayment benefits received under this service agreement.
2. I understand that I must maintain a performance rating of fully successful or better, in order to remain eligible for student loan repayments.
3. That in the event I am involuntarily separated for misconduct or performance before completing the agreed upon period of service, I will be indebted to the Federal Government and must reimburse the Government for the full amount of any student loan repayment benefits received under this service agreement.
4. If student loan repayment benefits are made in the 2nd or 3rd year, my service agreement will not be extended.
5. If student loan repayment benefits are made beyond 3 years, my service agreement will be extended by one year for each payment made beyond the 3rd year and a new service agreement will be required.
6. The amount of the student loan repayment benefit is \$_____ (up to \$10,000 per year – 5 CFR 537.106). I understand that the commitment to repay my loan is for one year, subject to yearly extensions.
7. The service agreement is effective Month/Day/Year (date employee signs agreement) through Month/Day/Year (minimum 3 years from the date the agreement is signed by employee).
8. The USDA is authorized to verify the status and outstanding balance of each loan and to discuss the terms with the lender or note holder.
9. This service agreement in no way constitutes a right, promise, or entitlement for continued employment or non-competitive conversion to the competitive service. That acceptance of this agreement does not alter the conditions or terms of my employment; accordingly, this agreement will not preclude nor limit the Agency from effecting personnel actions as may be appropriate.
10. I am responsible for making loan payments on the portion of the loan that continues to be my responsibility.

11 - Exhibit 05—Continued

11. The student loan repayment benefits made do not exempt me from my responsibility and/or liability for the loan.

12. I am responsible for any income tax obligation resulting from the student loan repayment benefit.

13. USDA is not responsible for any late fees assessed by the lender if the student loan repayment benefit is not received on time.

14. The student loan repayment benefits made on my behalf by the USDA will not exceed the maximum amount of \$60,000 (5 CFR 537.106).

I AGREE TO THE TERMS OF THIS SERVICE AGREEMENT:

Printed Name of Pathways Participant: _____

Signature _____

Date _____

cc: Pathways Program Coordinator
Copy to be filed in employee's e-OPF

Pathways Program, Intern Participant Agreement

Appointee's Full Name:	
Appointing Agency/Sub-Agency:	
Appointment Date (s):	Work Schedule:
Entrance on Duty (EOD) Date : _____	Monday _____
Appointment Not to Exceed (NTE) Date: _____	Tuesday _____
Program NTE Date: _____	Wednesday _____
Expected Graduation Date: _____	Thursday _____
	Friday _____
	Saturday _____
	Sunday _____

Position Title, Series and Grade	Pay
Intern's Responsibilities:	Hiring Official's/Supervisor's Responsibilities:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide proof of enrollment as necessary • Notify the agency of any change in your enrollment status and/or work schedule • Maintain at least a half-time course load as defined by the educational institution • Remain in good academic standing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maintain a GPA of _____ and above (<i>Optional - Agency specific</i>) • Adhere to an established work schedule • Adhere to the Intern Program requirements • Participate in agency training classes or programs • Perform, successfully, the assigned duties listed in your position description 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete a Participant Agreement with each Intern • Verify enrollment and eligibility for continued participation in the Program • Provide information on the Intern Program requirements • Identity job duties and responsibilities • Provide information on any special training requirements • Identify performance goals and evaluation criteria • Assign a Mentor within 90 days

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Trainees appointed to positions expected to last 90 days or more in a consecutive 12-month period, must complete an IDP within 45 days of the appointment into the Pathways Program • Student Trainees must complete 40 hours of AgLearn Training • Observe all workplace rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a mutually agreeable work schedule that does not interfere with the Intern’s academic schedule • Supervise daily work activities of the Intern <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If position offers conversion to the competitive service, identify the eligibility requirements for conversion and ensure your Intern is converted within the applicable timeframe (120 days from completion of all academic requirements).
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Work Assignments (Enter brief description of duties or attach a position description)

Program Requirements (Enter requirements for continuation and successful completion of Program)

Training Requirements (If applicable)

Mentoring (If your agency has a mentor requirement for Interns, enter those requirements)

Evaluation Procedures. (Summarize elements on which the Intern's performance appraisal will be based)

Minimum Eligibility Requirements for Noncompetitive Conversion (if any). (Include any agency specific requirements)

To be eligible for conversion to the competitive service, an Intern must:

- Be a U.S. citizen.
- Successfully complete academic course of study.
- Complete a minimum of 640 hours of work experience under the Internship Program.
- Meet the OPM Qualification Standard for the position the Intern may be converted to.
- Maintain acceptable performance under the agency's approved performance management system.
- Receive favorable recommendation for conversion from supervisor.

It is important to remember that eligibility for conversion does not guarantee that the agency will decide to opt for conversion.

SIGNATURES:

Intern:

Print Name

Signature

Date

Hiring Official/Supervisor:

Print Name

Signature

Date

Human Resources Approving Official:

Print Name

Signature

Date

Sample Pathways Program, Intern Break in Program Request Form

USDA Pathways Programs participants and their respective supervisors are required to submit a Break in the Program request form to their Mission Area Human Resources Directors (MAHRD), if the student is unable to attend school while working or unable to attend school and unable to work per CFR 362.203. The MAHRD will submit the request form to the USDA Pathways Program Officer for approval/disapproval. The request form must be submitted at least 45 days prior to the requested break in program date.

Participant's Name and Title: _____

Agency: _____

Supervisor's Name: _____

Date of Requested Break: Begin _____ **Ending** _____

USDA Pathways Programs Participant:

Reason for the Break in the Program Request (please attach documentation such as a letter from your school's Office of the Registrar or doctor's excuse)

Will the Break Impact your graduation date? Y/N (The USDA Pathways Participant Agreement must be attached and updated.)

Supervisor:

Approved _____

Denied _____

Supervisor Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Justification: Please provide justification if you approve and if you deny the request.

Student Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Human Resources Acknowledgement: _____ **Date:** _____

11 - Exhibit 07--Continued

USDA Pathways Programs Officer:

Approved _____ **Denied** _____

USDA Pathways Programs Officer: If this request is denied, please attach justification.

Pathways Programs Officer Signature: _____

Date _____

Sample Pathways Program, Intern NTE Extension Request Form

USDA Pathways Programs participants and their respective supervisors are required to submit an Extension Request Form to their Mission Area Human Resources Directors (MAHRD), if the Pathways participant is requesting to remain in the program beyond the typical allotted time period. The request form must be submitted at least 45 days prior to the end of the NTE date. **Note:** Intern NTEs must not be extended beyond 8 years from initial appointment date.

Participant's Name: _____

Specific Pathways Program: _____

Agency: _____

Supervisor's Name: _____

Dates of Extension: **Begin** _____ **Ending** _____

Entrance on Duty Date: _____

Graduation Date: _____

USDA Pathways Programs Participant:

Reason for the Extension Request (please attach documentation and a copy of the USDA Pathways Programs Participation Agreement)

Supervisor: **Approved** _____ **Denied**

Supervisor Signature: _____

Date:

Supervisor Justification:

Student Signature: _____

Date:

11 - Exhibit 08--Continued

Human Resources Acknowledgement: _____ **Date:** _____

Mission Area Human Resources Directors (MAHRD) or designee: If this request is denied, please attach justification.

Approved _____

Denied _____

Mission Area Human Resources Directors (MAHRD) or designee, Signature:

_____ **Date:** _____

Pathways Program, Recent Graduate Participant Agreement

Appointee's Full Name:	
Appointing Agency/Sub-Agency:	
Appointment Date (s):	Work Schedule:
Entrance on Duty (EOD) Date : _____ (MM/DD/YYYY)	Monday _____
Program Not to Exceed (NTE) Date: _____ (MM/DD/YYYY)	Tuesday _____
	Wednesday _____
	Thursday _____
	Friday _____
	Saturday _____
	Sunday _____
Position Title, Series and Grade	Pay
Recent Graduate's Responsibilities:	Hiring Official's/Supervisor's Responsibilities:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhere to the Recent Graduate Program requirements • Adhere to an established work schedule • Perform, successfully, the assigned duties listed in your position description • Participate in agency training classes or programs • Create an Individual Development Plan (IDP) with assistance from your manager. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ IDP must include at least 40 hours of formal interactive training ○ IDP must be completed within 45 days of your date of hire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Participant Agreement with each Recent Graduate • Provide information on the Recent Graduate Program requirements • Establish a mutually agreeable work schedule • Identify performance goals and evaluation criteria • Help Recent Graduate create an IDP which must be completed 45 days from date of hire • Assist Recent Graduate with the selection of a mentor within 90 days of date of hire <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mentor must be at an appropriate level outside of the Recent Graduate's chain of

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ IDPs must be created each year ● Select a mentor within 90 days of your date of hire. Your manager will assist you ● Attend regularly scheduled meetings with mentor 	<p style="text-align: center;">command</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide information on any special training requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure Recent Graduate participates in at least 40 hours of formal interactive training per year ● Supervise daily work activities ● Identify performance goals and evaluation criteria <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If the position offers noncompetitive conversion to the competitive service, identify the eligibility requirements for conversion and ensure the Recent Graduate is converted at the end of the Program.
--	---

Work Assignments (Enter brief description of duties or attach a position description)

Recent Graduates Program Requirements (Enter requirements for continuation and successful completion of Program)

Recent Graduates Training Requirements (Identify any special training requirements)

40 hours of formal interactive training each year.

Mentoring (Enter instructions on process to select Mentor)		
Evaluation Procedures (Summarize elements on which the Recent Graduate's performance appraisal will be based)		
Minimum Eligibility Requirements for Noncompetitive Conversion. (If this position offers noncompetitive conversion, enter any agency specific requirements)		
<p>To be eligible for conversion to the competitive service, the Recent Graduate must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a U.S. citizen. • Successfully complete all Recent Graduate Program requirements. • Meet the OPM Qualification Standard for the position to which the Recent Graduate may be converted to. • Maintain acceptable performance under the agency's approved performance management system. <p>It is important to remember that eligibility for conversion does not guarantee that the agency will decide to opt for conversion.</p>		
SIGNATURES:		
Recent Graduate:		
_____	_____	_____
<i>Print Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
Hiring Official/Supervisor:		
_____	_____	_____
<i>Print Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
Human Resources Approving Official:		
_____	_____	_____
<i>Print Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

**Pathways Program, Presidential Management Fellows Program
Participant Agreement**

Appointee's Full Name:	
Appointing Agency/Sub-Agency:	
Appointment Date (s):	Work Schedule:
Entrance on Duty (EOD) Date : _____ (MM/DD/YYYY)	Monday _____
Program Not to Exceed (NTE) Date: _____ (MM/DD/YYYY)	Tuesday _____
	Wednesday _____
	Thursday _____
	Friday _____
	Saturday _____
	Sunday _____

Position Title, Series and Grade	Pay
Fellow's Responsibilities:	Hiring Official's/Supervisor's Responsibilities:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhere to the Presidential Management Fellows Program requirements • Adhere to an established work schedule • Perform, successfully, the assigned duties listed in your position description • Observe all workplace rules • Create an Individual Development Plan (IDP) with assistance from your manager. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ IDP must include at least 80 hours of formal interactive training ○ IDP must be completed within 45 days of your date of hire ○ IDP must be completed each year • Select a Mentor within 90 days of your date of hire. Your manager will assist you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Participant Agreement with each Fellow • Provide information on the Presidential Management Fellows Program requirements • Establish a mutually agreeable work schedule • Identify performance goals and evaluation criteria • Help Fellow create an IDP which must be completed 45 days from date of hire • Assist Fellow with the selection of a mentor within 90 days of date of hire <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mentor must be at the managerial level outside of the Fellow's chain of command • Provide information on any special training requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure Fellow participates in at least 80 hours

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in agency training classes or programs • Attend regularly scheduled meetings with mentor 	<p style="text-align: center;">of formal interactive training per year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervise daily work activities • Identify performance goals and evaluation criteria
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the position offers noncompetitive conversion to the competitive service, identify the eligibility requirements for conversion and ensure the Fellow is converted at the end of Program.

Work Assignments (Enter brief description of duties or attach a position description)

PMF Program Requirements (Enter requirements for continuation and successful completion of Program)

PMF Training Requirements (Identify any special training requirements)

80 hours of formal interactive training each year.

Mentoring (Enter instructions on process to select Mentor)

Evaluation Procedures (Summarize elements on which the Fellow's performance appraisal will be based)

Minimum eligibility requirements for noncompetitive conversion. Does this position offer non-competitive conversion? (Include any agency specific requirements)

To be eligible for conversion to the competitive service, the Fellow must:

- Be a U.S. citizen.
- Successfully complete all PMF Program requirements.
- Meet the OPM Qualification Standard for the position to which the Fellow may be converted.
- Maintain acceptable performance under the agency's approved performance management system.
- Obtain ERB certification prior to conversion.

It is important to remember that eligibility for conversion does not guarantee that the agency will decide to opt for conversion.

USDA Pathways Intern Program Training and Development Plan

Purpose:

The purpose of the USDA Pathways Intern Program Training and Development Plan is to facilitate the design and implementation of the career and professional development of USDA Interns. The Plan outlines the training requirements for Interns and must be used in conjunction with each Pathways participant's Individual Development Plan.

Structure:

The Plan provides basic guidance for a competency-based training program that can be phased out to correspond with the performance appraisal cycle and blended into a variety of training formats. USDA managers and supervisors are required to provide periodic feedback and an assessment during the IDP evaluation process.

The first phase of the Plan provides an orientation to federal employment, professional development, and focuses on the core competencies that USDA values. The second phase of the plan focuses on technical competencies, application of knowledge, mentoring, etc.

Rotational Assignments, Mentoring Experience, and Shadowing Experience:

The rotational, mentoring, and shadowing experiences are important aspects of the Pathways Program experience. They allow participants to gain knowledge of a variety of skills and processes throughout the department. Before a rotational assignment is completed, the learning objectives in the participants IDP should be included and carefully examined. A written MOU should be prepared between both supervisors if the participant will be remaining within the agency. A MOU should be prepared between the specific agencies if the participant will be rotating and/or shadowing between agencies. The participant should receive a copy of the terms of the agreement. The rotational experience should have the following characteristics:

- Last at least 15 days and involve meaningful work experiences
 - Focus on developing the participants professional skills and defined competencies
 - Align with the strengths and areas of improvement as outlined in the participants IDP and performance plan
 - Allow the participant to gain experience in a different setting
- For example, if the participant works in Human Resources, he/she should rotate to the Office of General Counsel to gain insight into laws and regulations that impact his/her agency

Professional Associations, Seminars, Webinars, Conferences, Recommended Reading:

USDA Pathways Intern Program participants must participate in regularly scheduled webinars and seminars. The USDA Pathways Program Manager also strongly encourages program participants to participate in professional associations, USDA Connect blogs, and read periodic reviews in the career field of the participant's choice.

Roles and Responsibilities:

USDA Interns will be offered several learning opportunities throughout their experience at USDA. It is the responsibility of each USDA Pathways Program participant to take advantage of the dynamic training opportunity outlined in this training and development plan. The Student Trainee, must:

- Complete and implement an Individual Development Plan within 45 days of his/her entrance on duty date with the supervisor
- Complete at least 40 hours of training as outlined in this training plan
- Participate in a mentoring experience
- Participate in agency-wide and department-wide training opportunities

Courses for Student Trainees:

- The Voice of Leadership: Self-Assessment and Motivation
- [Introduction to AgLearn IDPs](#)
- Using Feedback to Improve Team Performance
- Diversity on the Job: Diversity and You
- Building Community
- Effective Interpersonal Communications Simulation
- Interpersonal Communication: Being Approachable
- Interpersonal Communication: Listening Essentials
- Strategies for Communicating with Tact and Diplomacy
- Applying problem solving skills
- Conflict, Stress, and Time Management
- Business Ethics Simulation
- Conflicts of Interest and Impartiality for USDA Employees
- Developing a Code of Ethical Conduct
- Ethics: Using Government Property and Time
- Business Grammar: Parts of Speech
- Business Grammar: The Mechanics of Writing
- Business Writing: Editing and Proofreading
- Communicating Across Cultures
- Business Writing: Know Your Readers and Your Purpose

11 - Exhibit 11—Continued

- Business Writing: How to Write Clearly and Concisely
- Ethics: Teaching, Speaking, Writing
- Essentials of Interviewing and Hiring: Preparing to Interview
- FSIS Writing Results-Oriented Accomplishment Reports
- Making your point in writing
- Building Improved Work Relationships Simulation
- Achieving Success: The Help of a Mentor
- 151 Quick Ideas to Improve Your People Skills
- Building Improved Work Relationships Simulation
- Are You Listening to Your Customers?
- Customer Service over the Phone
- Demonstrating Accountability in a Crisis Situation
- Professionalism, Business Etiquette, and Personal Accountability
- Critical Thinking Essentials: Applying Critical Thinking Skills
- Thinking Like a CFO: Preparing and Presenting a Business Case
- 100 Great Time Management Ideas
- 101 Ways to Make Every Second Count: Time Management Tips and Techniques for More Success with Less
- Campus to Corporate: Developing a Professional Image
- Communicating with Professionalism and Etiquette
- Addressing and Redistributing E-mail
- Public Speaking Strategies: Confident Public Speaking

**USDA Pathways Recent Graduates Program
Training and Development Plan**

Purpose:

The purpose of the USDA Pathways Recent Graduates Program Training and Development Plan is to facilitate the design and implementation of the career and professional development of USDA Recent Graduates. The Plan outlines the training requirements for Recent Graduates and must be used in conjunction with each Pathways participant's Individual Development Plan.

Structure:

The Plan provides basic guidance for a competency-based training program that can be phased out to correspond with the performance appraisal cycle and blended into a variety of training formats. USDA managers and supervisors are required to provide periodic feedback and an assessment during the IDP evaluation process.

The first phase of the Plan provides an orientation to federal employment, professional development, and focuses on the core competencies that USDA values. The second phase of the plan focuses on technical competencies, application of knowledge, mentoring, etc.

Rotational Assignments, Mentoring Experience, and Shadowing Experience:

The rotational, mentoring, and shadowing experiences are important aspects of the Pathways Program experience. They allow participants to gain knowledge of a variety of skills and processes throughout the department. Before a rotational assignment is completed, the learning objectives in the participants IDP should be included and carefully examined. A written MOU should be prepared between both supervisors if the participant will be remaining within the agency. A MOU should be prepared between the specific agencies if the participant will be rotating and/or shadowing between agencies. The participant should receive a copy of the terms of the agreement. The rotational experience should have the following characteristics:

- Last at least 15 days and involve meaningful work experiences
 - Focus on developing the participants professional skills and defined competencies
 - Align with the strengths and areas of improvement as outlined in the participants IDP and performance plan
 - Allow the participant to gain experience in a different setting
- For example, if the participant works in Human Resources, he/she should rotate to the Office of General Counsel to gain insight into laws and regulations that impact his/her agency

Professional Associations, Seminars, Webinars, Conferences, Recommended Reading:

USDA Pathways Recent Graduates Program participants must participate in regularly scheduled webinars and seminars. The USDA Pathways Program Manager also strongly encourages program participants to participate in professional associations, USDA Connect blogs, and read periodic reviews in the career field of the participant's choice.

Roles and Responsibilities:

USDA Recent Graduates will be offered several learning opportunities throughout their experience at USDA. It is the responsibility of each USDA Pathways Program participant to take advantage of the dynamic training opportunities outlined in this training and development plan. The Recent Graduates, must:

Courses for Student Trainees and Recent Graduates

- The Voice of Leadership: Self-Assessment and Motivation
- [Introduction to AgLearn IDPs](#)
- Using Feedback to Improve Team Performance
- Diversity on the Job: Diversity and You
- Building Community
- Emotional Intelligence at Work Simulation
- Effective Interpersonal Communications Simulation
- Interpersonal Communication: Being Approachable
- Interpersonal Communication: Listening Essentials
- Strategies for Communicating with Tact and Diplomacy
- Applying problem solving skills
- Conflict, Stress, and Time Management
- Business Ethics Simulation
- Developing a Code of Ethical Conduct
- 7 Steps to Better Written Policies and Procedures Exercises and Suggestions to Improve Your Writing
- Business Grammar: The Mechanics of Writing
- Business Writing: Editing and Proofreading
- Communicating Across Cultures
- Business Writing: Know Your Readers and Your Purpose
- Business Writing: How to Write Clearly and Concisely
- Ethics: Teaching, Speaking, Writing
- Essentials of Interviewing and Hiring: Preparing to Interview

11 - Exhibit 12—Continued

- FSIS Writing Results-Oriented Accomplishment Reports
- Making your point in writing
- Building Improved Work Relationships Simulation
- Achieving Success: The Help of a Mentor
- 151 Quick Ideas to Improve Your People Skills
- Building Improved Work Relationships Simulation
- Are You Listening to Your Customers?
- Customer Service over the Phone
- Administrative Professionals: Representing Your Boss
- Demonstrating Accountability in a Crisis Situation
- Professionalism, Business Etiquette, and Personal Accountability
- Leading Teams: Building Trust and Commitment
- Leading Teams: Launching a Successful Team
- Leading Teams: Motivating and Optimizing Performance
- Critical Thinking Essentials: Applying Critical Thinking Skills
- Thinking Like a CFO: Preparing and Presenting a Business Case
- Generating Creative and Innovative Ideas: Enhancing Your Creativity
- 100 Great Time Management Ideas
- 101 Ways to Make Every Second Count: Time Management Tips and Techniques for More Success with Less
- Public Speaking Strategies: Confident Public Speaking

**USDA Pathways PMF Program
Training and Development Plan**

Purpose:

The purpose of the USDA Pathways PMF Program Training and Development Plan is to facilitate the design and implementation of the career and professional development of PMFs. The Plan outlines the Pathways Programs training requirements for PMFs and must be used in conjunction with each Pathways participant's Individual Development Plan.

Structure:

The Plan provides basic guidance for a competency-based training program that can be phased out to correspond with the performance appraisal cycle and blended into a variety of training formats. USDA managers and supervisors are required to provide periodic feedback and an assessment during the IDP evaluation process.

The first phase of the plan provides an orientation to federal employment, professional development, and focuses on the core competencies that USDA values. The second phase of the plan focuses on technical competencies, application of knowledge, mentoring, etc. Presidential Management Fellows will be afforded a more robust training plan in an effort to meet OPM Senior Executive Leadership Training requirements.

PMF Roles and Responsibilities:

USDA PMFs will be offered several learning opportunities throughout their experience at USDA. It is the responsibility of each USDA Pathways Program participant to take advantage of the dynamic training opportunity outlined in this training and development plan. The PMF must:

- Complete and implement an Individual Development Plan within 45 days of his/her entrance on duty date with the supervisor
- Interns and Recent Graduates must complete at least 40 hours of training as outlined in this training plan
- PMFs must complete 80 hours of training per year for 2 years as outlined in this training plan
- Participate in a mentoring experience
- Participate in agency-wide and department-wide training opportunities

PMFs Rotational Supervisor

The role of the Rotational assignment Supervisor is extremely important. The rotational experience should foster creativity, decision-making, and knowledge transfer. The Rotational Supervisor is responsible for:

11 - Exhibit 13—Continued

- Provide a meaningful work experience
- Review and adhere to all rotational agreements
- Review the IDP and provide work that is aligned with the participants goals and objectives
- Provide performance feedback periodically
- Provide a copy of the performance assessment to the participant, the participant's immediate supervisor, the Student Interns Coordinator, and the Student Intern Development Program Manager

Rotational Assignments, Mentoring Experience, and Shadowing Experience:

The rotational, mentoring, and shadowing experiences are important aspects of the Pathways Programs experience. They allow participants to gain knowledge of a variety of skills and processes throughout the department. Before a rotational assignment is completed, the learning objectives in the participants IDP should be included and carefully examined. A written MOU should be prepared between both supervisors if the participant will be remaining within the agency. A MOU should be prepared between the specific agencies if the participant will be rotating and/or shadowing between agencies. The participant should receive a copy of the terms of the agreement. The rotational experience should have the following characteristics:

- Last at least 15 days and involve meaningful work experiences
- Focus on developing the participants professional skills and defined competencies
- Align with the strengths and areas of improvement as outlined in the participants IDP and performance plan
- Allow the participant to gain experience in a different setting
For example, if the participant works in Human Resources, he/she should rotate to the Office of General Counsel to gain insight into laws and regulations that impact his/her agency

Professional Associations, Seminars, Webinars, Conferences, Recommended Reading:

USDA Pathways PMF Program participants must participate in regularly scheduled webinars and seminars. The USDA Pathways Program Manager also strongly encourages program participants to participate in professional associations, USDA Connect blogs, and read periodic reviews in the career field of the participant's choice.

Courses for Presidential Management Fellows:

- The Voice of Leadership: Self-Assessment and Motivation
- [Introduction to AgLearn IDPs](#)
- Leader as Motivator

11 - Exhibit 13--Continued

- Leadership Essentials: Motivating Employees
- Leading Teams: Motivating and Optimizing Performance
- Maintaining an Engaging Organization
- Retaining Top Performers
- Motivating Human Behavior
- Preventing Problem Performance
- The Voice of Leadership: Effective Leadership Communication Strategies
- Business Execution: Crafting a Business Strategy that Executes
- Business Planning Essentials: Preparing for Implementation
- Developing and Deploying Strategic Plans
- Developing Learning Practices
- Developing the Capacity to Think Strategically
- Hiring Strategic Thinkers
- Strategic Decision Making
- Operations Management: Facilities Planning and Management
- Strategic Approaches to Workforce Planning and Employment (HRCI/SPHR)
- Strategic Planning
- Strategic Management (HRCI/PHR)
- Strategic IT Planning Simulation
- Managing Software Project Outsourcing: Dealing with Risks
- Strategic Planning and Risk Management
- Conducting a Successful Negotiation Simulation
- Cross Cultural Negotiations
- Handling Common Negotiation Challenges
- Cost Analysis and Negotiation Techniques
- Negotiation Essentials: Persuading
- Managing Procurements
- Negotiation Essentials: Communicating
- The Savvy Negotiator Building Win-Win Relationships
- Influence and Persuasion
- Getting Results without Direct Authority: Influencing Your Boss
- Influencing Key Decision Makers
- Leadership Essentials: Building Your Influence as a Leader
- Influencing Strategies
- Partnering for Results
- Cross-functional Team Fundamentals

11 - Exhibit 13—Continued

- Find opportunities for innovation
- Generating Creative and Innovative Ideas: Maximizing Team Creativity
- Leading Innovation
- Approaches to Risk Management
- Communicating a Shared Vision
- Business Execution: Linking Strategy to People and Operations
- Communication Skills and Project Management
- Conflict Management
- Strategic Approaches to Labor Relations (HRCI/SPHR)
- Managing Project Human Resources
- Budgeting
- Effective Budget Management
- Creating and Designing a Project
- Addressing Attrition in High Performance Teams
- Compensating Employees (HRCI/PHR)
- Developing Employees (HRCI/PHR)
- Management of the HR Process (HRCI/SPHR)
- Thinking like a CFO: Mind-set and Financial Priorities
- Organizational Budgeting Activities and the Master Budget
- 101 Tips for Telecommuters: Successfully Manage Your Work, Team, Technology and Family
- Guide to the Project Management Body Of Knowledge
- Advanced Scheduling Management with Project 2010
- Capital Budgeting: Capital Allocation
- Business Analysis Requirements Management and Communication
- Developing and Controlling the Project Schedule
- Communication Skills and Project Management
- Controlling Costs
- Developing and Controlling the Project Schedule
- Introduction to Program Management
- Identifying Project Risks
- Building Trust
- Public Speaking Strategies: Preparing Effective Speeches
- Addressing Problem Performance
- 7 Steps to Better Written Policies and Procedures Exercises and Suggestions to Improve Your Writing
- 151 Quick Ideas for Delegating and Decision Making

11 - Exhibit 13--Continued

- Decision Making: Making Tough Decisions
- Customer-Driven Process Improvement: Analyzing Process Problems
- Thinking Like a CFO: Preparing and Presenting a Business Case
- Cross-functional Strategic Management
- Delegation Essentials: An Introduction to Delegating
- Demonstrating Accountability in a Crisis Situation

Recent Graduates Extension Request Form

Supervisors are required to submit an Extension Request Form to their Agency Mission Area Human Resources Directors (MAHRD), if the Recent Graduate needs to remain in the program beyond the typical allotted time period. The request for extension must be submitted at least 45 days prior to end date of the participants end date.

Recent Graduates Printed Name: _____

Agency: _____

Supervisor's Printed Name: _____

Dates of Extension: Begin _____ **Ending** _____

Entrance on Duty Date: _____

Graduation Date: _____

Recent Graduates reason for the request (to be completed by the Recent Graduate):

Reason for the Extension Request (please attach documentation to support your request and a copy of the USDA Pathways Programs Participation Agreement)

Recent Graduates Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Supervisor Acknowledgement: Recommend approval/disapproval

Supervisor's Justification:

Supervisor's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Mission Area Human Resources Directors (MAHRD)

MAHRD Acknowledgement: Recommend approval/disapproval

If disapproved, please explain why:

MAHRD's Printed Name: _____

MAHRD's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

PMF Extension Request Form

Supervisors are required to submit an Extension Request Form to their Agency Mission Area Human Resources Directors (MAHRD), if the Pathways participant needs to remain in the program beyond the typical allotted time period. The MAHRD will review the request form and forward it to the ERB for approval/disapproval. The request for extension must be submitted at least 45 days prior to end date of the participants end date.

PMF's Printed Name: _____

Agency: _____

Supervisor's Printed Name: _____

Dates of Extension: Begin _____ **Ending** _____

Entrance on Duty Date: _____

Graduation Date: _____

PMF's reason for the request: (to be completed by the PMF):

Reason for the Extension Request (please attach documentation to support your request and a copy of the USDA Pathways Programs Participation Agreement)

PMF's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Supervisor Acknowledgement: Recommend approval/disapproval

Supervisor's Justification:

Supervisor's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Mission Area Human Resources Directors (MAHRD)

MAHRD Acknowledgement: Recommend approval/disapproval

If disapproved, please explain why:

MAHRD's Printed Name: _____

MAHRD's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

The Executive Resources Board (ERB)

ERB acknowledgement: Recommend approval/disapproval

If disapproved, please explain why:

ERB's Printed Name: _____

ERB's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

MENTORING PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

We agree to begin a mutually beneficial partnership focused on the development of the mentee. We will be partners in learning, meeting informally to share knowledge and experiences.

1. We will meet at least _____ per month for at least one hour for the next twelve months, at mutually agreeable sites. Should one of us be unable to attend the meeting, that partner will inform the other as far in advance as possible.
2. We will actively listen to one another in order to further the learning experience.
3. We will collaboratively develop a plan, which will help the mentee to progress.
4. The mentor may present options to the mentee, but in no instance will mandate courses of action.
5. The mentee will seriously consider options and suggestions presented by the mentor.
6. Once a plan is developed, we will both take actions, as agreed upon, in a timely manner.
7. Our meetings will be confidential. Neither party will divulge what has been discussed without the permission of the other.
8. While best practices on effective mentoring partnerships advocate “no fault” termination of relationships where partners are not a good fit, we commit to work toward resolution of all issues. If unresolved issues persist, the designated administrative point of contact is available to further discuss issues.
9. The agreement is subject to other terms as listed below and may be revised at any time, if we both agree to the changes.

OTHER TERMS:

Mentor’s Signature

Date

Mentee’s Signature

Date

**USDA Pathways Programs Certification Request for
PMF Conversion to the Competitive Service**

Agency: _____

PMF's Full Name: _____

Date Hired: _____

Anticipated Conversion Date: _____

Supervisor's Full Name and Title: _____

Presidential Management Fellow's (PMF) must complete their Program within 2 years from the date of initial appointment. At the conclusion of that period, the Fellow may be converted as provided in the Pathways DR.

Section 1 – Agency Certification of Program Completion and Request for Review:

Submit this certification request, with supporting documentation, to the Provost, Virtual University, Office of Human Resources Management, at least 45 days prior to the PMF's anticipated conversion date. PMFs **may not be converted** to a term or permanent appointment until after the Request for Conversion has been reviewed and approved by the Department's Executive Resources Board (ERB). Complete Section 1, ensuring all required signatures and documents are attached, as follows.

Include the following documents in three tabbed sets with this request for conversion:

1. Position Description (for the PMF's target grade/position);
2. Performance Plan for the first and second year of the Program;
3. Performance appraisal for first and second year of the Program, at least at the fully successfully level; (If the request for conversion is in the middle of a performance cycle the Fellow's official supervisor of record must attach a written interim performance rating)
4. Completed Individual Development Plan (IDP);
5. Copy of the certificate of attendance at the Office of Personnel Management PMF Orientation;
6. Copies of the PMF's completion of training certificates or AgLearn training record;

11 - Exhibit 17--Continued

7. Satisfactory completion of the 120-day Developmental Assignment, with a narrative written by the PMF, endorsed by the Fellow's official supervisor of record, detailing the assignment. Specifically, where the detail was performed; expected outcomes; major duties and accomplishments; and how the detail related to the PMF's target position and broadened the Fellow's experience.

All requirements of the Presidential Management Fellows Program have been met.

PMF Signature and Date _____

Agency PMF Coordinator Signature and Date _____

Do you recommend this individual for conversion to a term or permanent appointment in the Federal competitive service? Yes No

PMF Supervisor Signature and Date

SECTION 2 – Virtual University Review

If there are any discrepancies/omissions with the items submitted with the request, the request for conversion will be returned to the Agency PMF Coordinator, for revision(s).

As listed in Section 1 all required documents are submitted with the Request for Conversion.

All requirements for conversion have been met.

Virtual University PMF Program Manager Signature and Date: _____

SECTION 3 – Executive Resources Board Action

Date Received: _____

Certified Not certified (attach explanation)

Additional information requested (Attach an explanation of requested information)

ERB Chairperson's Signature & Date

Signature, Printed Name, and Title of the ERB Chairperson



**U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
USDA Pathways Internship Program
Agency JOA Desk-Aid**

The USDA Pathways Internship Program Agency Posting Desk-Aid is intended to be of ease for HR Professionals to use to post all internship job opportunity announcements (JOA) on USAJOBS. The automated system being used to advertise vacancies will drive the fields where specific information is entered. An ad is different than a JOA posting in that the applicant is not submitting applications through USAJOBS but through your Talent Acquisition System (TAS). For additional details, view OPM's Pathways Programs Guidance on Posting Jobs for Students and Recent graduates on USAJOBS. The desk-aid is also designed to post one announcement for each position that a Mission Area/Agency/Office is seeking to fill with diverse students from urban, rural or suburban areas. The internships can be for mission critical positions or other student positions that support the USDA mission. Mission Areas/Agencies/Offices must follow the Departmental Management issued Desk-Aid to publically announce their intention to hire an intern. All other hiring related procedures are also expected to be followed (creation of certificates of eligibles, interview process, selections, etc.)

CATEGORY SECTION	INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED (order of category sections will vary based upon posting on USAJOBS or TAS)	CHECK (√)
Job Announcement Type:	Designate what type of JOA and set up of case file (identify with open/close date, open continuous, on-going or standing register on USAJOBS or TAS)	
Job Announcement Number:	(INSERT YOUR AGENCY'S Identification # assigned to the JOA by the TAS (if applicable))	
Job Title:	INSERT POSITION NAME and in parenthesis (USDA Pathways Internship Program) – essential for applicants to easily input in order to use the search engine to identify internship opportunities	
Duty Location(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List vacancies in multiple locations: (INSERT LOCATIONS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ (CITY, STATE) ○ (CITY, STATE) ○ (CITY, STATE) <li align="center">OR • List in one location: (INSERT LOCATION) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ (CITY, STATE) 	
Hiring Organization:	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) (INSERT YOUR AGENCY'S FULL NAME (ACRONYM)) (INSERT ANY SUB-AGENCY/OFFICE/DIVISION FULL NAME (ACRONYM))	
Occupation Code:	(INSERT SERIES)	
Pay Plan:	Federal Pay Plan – General Schedule (ideally GS Grades 1-11)	
Appointment Duration:	List as Summer, Fall, Winter, Spring Intern Position or Internship (for term to be easily searchable on USAJOBS)	
Opening Date:	(INSERT OPEN DATE – excluding weekends & holidays)	
Closing Date:	(INSERT CLOSE DATE – excluding weekends & holidays)	
Job Status:	List status as Full-time, Part-time, Shift work, Intermittent, Job Sharing or Multiple Schedule	
Salary Min:	List as Step 1 of pay scale of lowest graded position offered	

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Salary Max:	List as Step 10 of pay scale of highest graded position offered	
Salary Basis:	INSERT ANNUAL, HOURLY or INTERMITTENT SALARY	
Total Number of Openings:	LIST NUMERIC VALUE OR as “few”, “many” or “various” positions per locations by City & State (if applicable)	
Pay Grade Low:	Lowest pay grade of the position(s)	
Who May Apply:	List all that apply: Student Program Eligibles, All Groups of Qualified Individuals, Exclusive Posting (Each option provides its own canned statement that appears in the announcement).	
Job Summary:	<p>List overall description of the job being posted for the student to understand the nature of the position. Position is based on the career fields described in the job summary.</p> <p>USDA provides a well-organized worksite, ensuring the student knows and understands his/her job in order to perform effectively and efficiently. It is very important that students have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and are given specific duties and work assignments. Supervisors and/or mentors will be available to help guide the students and to ensure that assignments are performed properly. Students will be treated fairly and equitably, with dignity and respect by their supervisor. In turn, students will be expected to treat their supervisor as well as their colleagues with courtesy and respect.</p> <p>(AGENCIES WILL SELECT THOSE OCCUPATIONS AND SERIES ARE CONSIDERING HIRING UNDER THE THREE (3) CAREER FIELDS LISTED BELOW AND PROVIDE A BRIEF PARAGRAPH OF THE SUMMARIZED DUTIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE SUBSET OF CAREER FIELD TO INCLUDE IN THE VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE STUDENT(S) WILL BE PERFORMING). REMOVE ALL CAREER FIELDS AND SUBSET CAREER FIELDS NOT BEING USED/DESCRIBED/MENTIONED).</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Post all of the following:</p> <p>Most positions (paid or unpaid) will be in the following career fields. A full list of occupational title and job series can be found on USAJOBS.gov. Examples of USDA Mission Critical Occupations (MCO) and Non-MCOs:</p> <p>Management Career Fields:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration and Office Support (Series 0301-0399) & Student Trainee series - 0399 (<i>Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant, Receptionist, Mail and File Clerk, Office Automation, Administrative Clerk, Computer Clerk, Management & Program Analyst, Logistics, Communications Clerk, Program Clerk or Assistant</i>) • Financial Management (Series 0501-0599) & Student Trainee series - 0599(<i>Financial, Accounting, Auditing, Budget, Insurance Clerk or Assistant</i>) • General (Series 0001-0099) & Student Trainee series - 0099 (<i>Safety Technician, Outdoor Recreation Planning, Park Ranger, Environmental Protection Assistant, Fingerprint Identification, Security, Fire Protection and Prevention Clerk or Assistant</i>) • Human Resources Management (Series 0201-0299) & Student Trainee series - 0299 (<i>Human Resources Assistant or Clerk</i>) 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigation (Series 1801-1899) & Student Trainee series - 1899 (Compliance Inspection and Support, Criminal Investigation, Investigative Analyst, Agricultural Warehouse Inspection, Equal Opportunity Investigation, Consumer Safety Inspection, Food Inspection Clerk or Assistant) • Information and Arts (Series 1001-1099) & Student Trainee series - 1099 (Public Affairs, Writing and Editing, Audiovisual Clerk or Assistant) • Legal Occupations (Series 0901-0999) & Student Trainee series - 0999 (Legal or Paralegal Assistant or Clerk) <p>Agribusiness and Industry Career Fields:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business and Industry (Series 1101-1199) & Student Trainee series - 1199 (Agricultural Marketing, Agricultural Program, Procurement/Contract Financial Analyst, Loan Purchasing, Procurement, Public Utilities, Trade, Crop Insurance Administration Clerk or Assistant) • Quality Inspection (Series 1901-1999) & Student Trainee series - 1999 (Agricultural Commodities Aide) • Social Science (Series 0100-0199) & Student Trainee series - 0199 (Archaeology, Economist, Economic, General Anthropology, History, Geography, Foreign Agriculture Affairs, International Relations, Psychology, Social Science, Sociology, Workforce Research and Analyst Assistant) <p>Science and Technology Fields:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biological Science (Series 0401-0499) & Student Trainee series - 0499 (Agronomy, Botany, Fish Biology, Forestry, Range Technician, Soil Conservation Technician/Soil Conservation Specialist, General Natural Resources Management and Biological Sciences Assistant) • Engineering and Architecture (Series 0801-0899) & Student Trainee series - 0899 (Agricultural Engineering, Engineering Technical, Safety Engineering, Fire Protection Engineering, Landscape Architecture, Civil Engineering, Survey Technical, Environmental Engineering, Bioengineering Assistant) • Information Technology (Series 2201-2299) & Student Training series - 2299 (various parentheticals – SYSADMIN, CUSTSPT, INFOSEC, APPSWDATAMNGT, NETWORK, etc.) Assistant or Clerk • Mathematics and Statistics (Series 1501-1599) & Student Trainee series - 1599 Mathematical or Statistics Assistant • Medical and Health (Series 0601-0699) & Student Trainee series - 0699 (Consumer Safety, Dietitian and Nutritionist, Public Health Program Assistant) • Physical Science (Series 1301-1399) & Student Trainee series - 1399 (Food Technology, Cartographic, Land Surveying, Geology, Hydrology, Chemistry Assistant) 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veterinary and Animal Health (Series 0701-0799) & Student Trainee series - 0799 (<i>Animal Health and Technician Veterinary Medical Science Assistant</i>) 	
Major Duties:	Provide a brief paragraph or bullet items along with summarized duties that you want the student to perform; to inform the student of the expected activities associated with the job posting.	
Requirements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must be at least 16 years of age. • Males born after 12/31/1959 must be registered with the Selective Service. • Must complete and pass a background and security investigation. • All requirements must be met by the closing date of this announcement. • A post-secondary certificate program must have been completed at a qualified educational institution equivalent to at least 1 academic year or full-time study that is part of an accredited college-level, technical, trade, vocational, or business school curriculum. • Education completed outside of the United States must be deemed equivalent to that gained in conventional/accredited U.S. education programs to be accepted for Federal employment. If you received a degree abroad, contact the agency to which you are applying for guidance regarding having your degree reviewed by a U.S. based credential evaluation service. • If you are a student veteran, complete the questionnaire and submit documentation (DD-214, SF-15 and proof of requested on the SF-15 if claiming 10-point Veterans' preference or DD-2014 if claiming 5 point preference or VEOA eligibility (separated under honorable conditions after 3 years or more of continuous service). • Students with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). • <p>What qualifies as an accredited educational institution? A high school/GED whose curriculum has been approved by a state or local governing body, or a home-curriculum; and any accredited technical or vocational school, 2 or 4 year college or university, a graduate or professional, or a post secondary home school curriculum.</p> <p>Applicants may refer to the U.S. Department of Education's Institutional Accreditation System to determine whether their school/program is accredited: http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/</p>	
Evaluations:	<p>Before you submit an application for any of our vacancies, students should completely review the job description. Students should not apply for positions, if they do not meet both the required minimum qualifications AND any selective factors described in the announcement.</p> <p>If you have reviewed the announcement and believe that you can meet both the minimum qualifications and selective factors, you should document your experience and education in your résumé. Since traditional résumés do not provide all the information needed to determine your qualifications for Federal positions, you should create a more detailed résumé to use when applying for Federal positions. Your résumé must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GPA • Complete course work (unit/credit hours) • Work and/or volunteer experience including employment dates, salary and supervisor information • References <p>Please ensure that your resume contains your full name, country of citizenship, permanent address, contact phone number and email address.</p>	

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Qualifications:	<p>To qualify for the USDA Pathways Internship Program, applicants must meet the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If converted to a career or career-conditional position, the selectee must be a U.S. Citizen or U.S. Permanent Resident (with proper documentation). • Must be enrolled at least ½ times or accepted as a degree seeking student. • Must have at least one year of academic study remaining toward completion of current academic degree. • Must submit unofficial transcript(s). Official transcript(s) will be required, if applicant is selected for a position). • For GPA (Agencies will INSERT the required GPA for the specific position being filled. <p><u>(AGENCIES WILL ADD THIS STATEMENT BELOW IF THE INTERNSHIP POSITION IS LONGER THAN ONE YEAR)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be able to complete 640 hours of work experience prior to completing degree course work requirement to qualify for potential conversion to a permanent position. <p>Students will be hired under the following GS levels that will determine their salary:</p> <p><u>(AGENCIES WILL CHOOSE THE GS LEVEL and standard description used for minimally qualified education /experience)</u></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="492 1003 1333 1711"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="492 1003 597 1081">GRAD E</th> <th data-bbox="597 1003 1333 1081">LEVEL OF EDUCATION</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="492 1081 597 1138">GS-1</td> <td data-bbox="597 1081 1333 1138">Enrollment in an approved high school, home schooled, or GED program</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="492 1138 597 1194">GS-2</td> <td data-bbox="597 1138 1333 1194">High school diploma or equivalent</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="492 1194 597 1251">GS-3</td> <td data-bbox="597 1194 1333 1251">Completion of 1 full academic year of post-high school study</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="492 1251 597 1308">GS-4</td> <td data-bbox="597 1251 1333 1308">Completion of 2 full academic years of post-high school study or associate's degree</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="492 1308 597 1392">GS-5</td> <td data-bbox="597 1308 1333 1392">Completion of all requirements for a bachelor's degree or equivalent degree</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="492 1392 597 1497">GS-7</td> <td data-bbox="597 1392 1333 1497">Completion of 1 full academic year of graduate level education or eligibility under the Superior Academic Achievement Provision after completing a bachelor's degree</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="492 1497 597 1554">GS-9</td> <td data-bbox="597 1497 1333 1554">Completion of all requirements for a master's degree or equivalent degree</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="492 1554 597 1711" rowspan="2">GS-11</td> <td data-bbox="597 1554 1333 1631">For research positions, completion of all requirements for a master's or equivalent degree</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="597 1631 1333 1711">For non-research positions, completion of all requirements for a PhD or equivalent degree</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	GRAD E	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	GS-1	Enrollment in an approved high school, home schooled, or GED program	GS-2	High school diploma or equivalent	GS-3	Completion of 1 full academic year of post-high school study	GS-4	Completion of 2 full academic years of post-high school study or associate's degree	GS-5	Completion of all requirements for a bachelor's degree or equivalent degree	GS-7	Completion of 1 full academic year of graduate level education or eligibility under the Superior Academic Achievement Provision after completing a bachelor's degree	GS-9	Completion of all requirements for a master's degree or equivalent degree	GS-11	For research positions, completion of all requirements for a master's or equivalent degree	For non-research positions, completion of all requirements for a PhD or equivalent degree	
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How To Apply:	<p><u>(AGENCIES MUST DESCRIBE THE PROCESS USING SIMPLE LANGUAGE)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STEP 1 – SUBMIT RESUME: build a resume in USAJOBS or attach one from your files. Show relevant experience and education. • STEP 2 – PERSONAL INFORMATION: fill out all information required in the vacancy announcement. 																				

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STEP 3 – REVIEW: review your application for spelling and grammatical errors. • STEP 4 –SUBMIT APPLICATION: after reviewing your application, submit it. <p style="text-align: center;">ONLY electronic submissions will be accepted, none by fax or email.</p> <p>NOTES: Applicants are encouraged to complete their applications well before the application deadline to be assured of consideration.</p> <p>Applicants who apply online will automatically receive email acknowledgement of receipt of their application.</p> <p>Applications and supporting documents must be submitted by 11:59pm Eastern Standard Time on the closing date of the announcement to receive consideration.</p>	
Required Documents:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover letter (one-page maximum). • Unofficial transcripts are accepted, but if you are offered a position, official transcripts must be submitted. • Résumé • If you are a veteran, submit documentation (DD-214, SF-15 and proof of requested on the SF-15 if claiming 10-point Veterans' preference or DD-2014 if claiming 5 point preference or VEOA eligibility (separated under honorable conditions after 3 years or more of continuous service). • Students with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). • <u>(AGENCIES WILL ADD ANOTHER BULLET IF REQUESTING ANSWERS TO A QUESTIONNAIRE) AND ADD A LINK TO VIEW THE QUESITONS.</u> <p>Conditions of Employment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants are advised that false answers or omissions of information on any application materials or inability to meet the following conditions may be grounds for non-selection, withdrawal of an offer of employment, or dismissal after being employed. • All information is subject to verification. • Selection for this position is contingent upon completion of OF-306, Declaration for Federal Employment during the pre-employment process. • Selection for this position is contingent upon proof of U.S. citizenship or, for noncitizens, proof of authorization to work in the United States plus proof of entitlement to receive compensation. Additional information and guidance on the employment of non-citizens can be found at: http://www.usajobs.gov/ResourceCenter/Index/Interactive/NonCitizensEmployment#icc. For a list of documents that may be used to provide proof of citizenship or authorization to work in the United States, please refer to Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification, available at http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-9.pdf. • If not previously completed, a background security investigation will be required for all selectees. Appointment will be subject to the applicant's successful completion of a background security investigation and favorable adjudication. Failure to successfully meet these requirements may be grounds for appropriate personnel action. In addition, if selected, a background security reinvestigation or supplemental investigation may be required at a later time. 	

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<p>What To Expect Next:</p>	<p>Before you submit an application for any of our vacancies, students should completely review the vacancy announcement. Students should not apply for positions, if they do not meet both the required minimum qualifications and any selective factors described in the vacancy announcement.</p> <p>If you have reviewed the vacancy announcement and believe that you can meet both the minimum qualifications and selective factors, you should document your experience and education in your résumé. Since traditional résumés do not provide all the information needed to determine your qualifications for Federal positions, you should create a more detailed résumé to use when applying for Federal positions. Your résumé must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GPA • Complete course work (unit/credit hours) • Work and volunteer experience and include employment dates, salary and supervisor information • References <p>Please ensure that your resume contains your full name, country of citizenship, permanent address, contact phone number and email address.</p> <p><i>USDA Student Trainees who study veterinary or biological science or attend an 1890 Land Grant university, 1994 Tribal College, or Hispanic Serving Institution, may be eligible for the USDA Scholars Program to receive scholarship as well as a university grant for room and board.”</i></p> <p>Salary will be determined based on academic classification using the general schedule (GS) or wage grade (WG) levels.</p> <p>Salary listed is on an annual pay basis only. Locality pay will be set at time of selection based on locality location.</p> <p>Federal jobs are filled using a competitive process, understanding the timing of the process will better prepare you for the wait after you submit your application. During this time period, the Human Resources Specialists or Assistants will begin reviewing the applications received to determine if the applicants meet the qualification requirements outlined. You will be rated based on your qualifications for this position as evidenced by the education, experience, and training you report relative to this position which show the degree to which you possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities listed in this announcement. Those candidates who do meet the minimum education and work experience qualifications will then be reviewed by a number of flexibilities that are available to select candidates. Your application will be rated using Category Rating Procedures. In Category Rating, an agency will have no fewer than two rating categories - usually three. They may be named differently but are generally representative of the “Most Highly Qualified”, “Well Qualified” and “Minimally Qualified”. You will be placed in one of the categories based on your resume, education, experience and any answers to ranking questions and other factors (if applicable).</p> <p>The process can take a few days, or a few weeks, depending on the number of applications received. Once the various qualified list of candidates are identified, a “certificate of eligibles” is prepared and sent to the supervisor (or selecting official) for the position. The supervisor will then review the applications and determine who among the “best qualified” will be interviewed. Interviews are scheduled and conducted, reference and background checks are completed, and a final selection is made. The recruitment and selection process may take several weeks from the time a position is advertised or closed to when a selection is made. Do not be deterred or discouraged by this hiring timeframe. It is ok to ask questions and keep in touch with the point of contact during this time of the application process.</p> <p>As a reminder, you should always print and keep a copy of this announcement. The</p>	

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	<p>announcement will have the contact information for the position, which you can use to check further on the status of your application. Do not hesitate to ask the status of your application. Just keep in mind that the Federal hiring process does take time. Calling the Human Resources Office daily will not speed up the process. Rather, you might wait a few weeks or a month and then call for a status update. In most cases, you will be sent a notice acknowledging the receipt of your application. You will also be notified once a final selection has been made as a common practice or procedural to close out the announcement. All applicants are notified by email once a selection is made for a position. Feel free to contact: The Human Resources Specialist or Assistant assigned to the announcement to request feedback on your application if you were not referred for consideration.</p> <p>Should you be selected for an interview, you will be evaluated based upon your responses to questions provided during a structured interview. In responding to structured interview questions, you should be sure to cite specific examples of experience, explain what you did, and the outcome.</p>	
Benefits:	<p><u>(AGENCIES WILL ADD THIS INFORMATION)</u></p> <p>USDA - (<u>agency acronym here</u>) will provide the following benefits to their student hires:</p> <p>All students hired under the USDA Pathways Internship Program are entitled to benefits such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commuter Transit Subsidy (pending the availability of budgeted funds/allocations) • Telework and/or Flexible work schedule (upon supervisor approval) <p>Students hired under the USDA Pathways Internship Program on a temporary appointment are generally not entitled to benefits. However, once they have been continuously employed for over a year without a break in service exceeding 5 days, they may enroll in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, but they would have to pay 100 percent of the premium (i.e., both the employee and Government share). Temporary employees are not eligible for coverage under the Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance Program.</p> <p>Students hired under the USDA Pathways Internship Program for a period expected to last longer than 1 year are eligible for health and life insurance coverage as long as they are expected to be employed under this appointment for over 1 year and are expected to be in a pay status for at least one-third of the total period of time from the date of their initial appointment to the date of the completion of the Program.</p> <p>The cost of premiums is split between the employee and the agency, as it is for all permanent employees. (<i>See 5 CFR 870.202 for life insurance and 5 CFR 890.102 for health benefits.</i>)</p>	
NOTES:	<p>Applicants are advised that false answers or omissions of information on any application materials or inability to meet the following conditions may be grounds for non-selection, withdrawal of an offer of employment, or dismissal after being employed. All information is subject to verification.</p> <p>If not previously completed, a background security investigation will be required for all selectees. Appointment will be subject to the applicant's successful completion of a background security investigation and favorable adjudication. Failure to successfully meet these requirements may be grounds for appropriate personnel action. In addition, if selected, a background security reinvestigation or supplemental investigation may be required at a later time.</p> <p>Students are encouraged to: 1) browse jobs that meet your qualifications, grade, and geographic location; 2) update your profile; 3) upload your resume; and 4) set up an account to have job openings emailed to you when a position of interest opens.</p>	

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	<p>Additional helpful hints can be found regarding information on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal Jobs by College Major and Internship/Recent Graduate Opportunities: (https://www.usajobs.gov/studentjobs) • Federal Benefits (http://www.opm.gov/insure) <p>EEO Policy Statement: http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/diversity-and-inclusion/reports/#url=Federal-Equal-Opportunity-and-Recruitment-Program</p> <p>Reasonable Accommodation Policy Statement: http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/disability-employment/reasonable-accommodations/</p> <p>Veterans Information: http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-authorities/veterans-authorities/#url=Overview</p> <p>Legal and Regulatory Guidance: https://www.usajobs.gov/Home/Sitemap</p>	
Agency Information:	(AGENCIES WILL ADD THE DESIGNATED HUMAN RESOURCES SPECIALIST OR ASSISTANT WHO POSTED THE ANNOUNCEMENT, AS THE POINT OF CONTACT ALONG WITH A PHONE #, TDD# AND/OR E-MAIL ADDRESS TO FIELD QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS JOB OR ACCEPT INQUIRIES FROM APPLICANTS). NOTE: No applications are to be received via USAJOBS and/or TAS and not by email or fax to HR POC.	

GENERAL NOTES:

*Position is based on the career fields described in the job summary.

***Attendance at USDA recruitment and career events:**

- Accepting applications in conjunction with special events is NOT permitted due to the nature of securing personally identifiable information (PII) and it is not in compliance with OPM Pathways regulations.
- The agency may be participating in a job fair or other special event at a college or university on a given day or days. The agency will notify OHRM so that an advertisement can be placed on USAJOBS, if Pathways opportunities are available.
- In the “Pathways JOA”, the agency may redirect the candidate to the agency’s website in which applicants are informed about the job fair or special event and provided information about applying.
- At the special event, the agency may direct candidates to the agency’s website to apply or utilize another method by which applications are received.
- Public notice has been met because the opportunity is posted on the “Students and Recent Graduates” section of USAJOBS for the same number of days it is posted on the agency’s website.

***Below are examples of ways in which agencies can meet the public notice requirement and still have the flexibility in approaches for receiving applications:**

- Applying directly through a “Pathways JOA” on USAJOBS. In this case, the agency desires to have the “Pathways JOA” contain all information about the opportunity and how to apply. The candidate is then directed from the “Pathways JOA” to the agency’s back end system to apply (i.e. Talent Acquisition System – TAS).

Considerations:

- Using an automated system provides structure and guides candidates through specific processes the agency may require. It allows agencies to track its applicants by vacancy and makes it easier to retrieve data on its recruitment efforts at a later date.
- Some candidates view the use of automated systems (as opposed to sending in a resume) in a negative light and may be reluctant to apply. Job seekers are encouraged to put their resume and supporting documentation on USAJOBS AND TAS.

***Apply through another means after viewing the “Pathways JOA.”**

- In this case, the candidate views the opportunity on USAJOBS through the “Pathways JOA”.
- The candidate is then advised under “How to Apply” to go to the agency’s website to learn more about the vacancy and apply under the agency’s desired method.

Considerations:

- Provides maximum flexibility to the agency and may be attractive to candidates because it conveys ease of use and similarities to methods for job applications in the private sector.
- This may be an optimal approach if an agency is using the “Pathways JOA” to advertise several opportunities in multiple series or occupational specialties and candidates are directed to the agency’s website to apply as opposed to applying directly from the JOA itself.
- Agencies are not able to track easily the data on number of applicants per vacancy, etc. since applications are not being accepted through an automated system.

11 - Exhibit 19



**U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
USDA Pathways Recent Graduate Program
Agency JOA Desk-Aid**

The USDA Pathways Recent Graduate Program Agency Posting Desk-Aid is intended to be of ease for HR Professionals to use to post all recent graduate job opportunity announcements (JOA) on USAJOBS. The automated system being used to advertise vacancies will drive the fields where specific information is entered. An ad is different than a JOA posting in that the applicant is not submitting applications through USAJOBS but through your Talent Acquisition System (TAS). For additional details, view OPM's Pathways Programs Guidance on Posting Jobs for Students and Recent graduates on USAJOBS. The desk-aid is also designed to post one announcement for each position that a Mission Area/Agency/Office is seeking to fill with diverse students from urban, rural or suburban areas. The recent graduate positions can be for mission critical positions or other student positions that support the USDA mission. Mission Areas/Agencies/Offices must follow the Departmental Management issued Desk-Aid to publically announce their intention to hire an intern. All other hiring related procedures are also expected to be followed (creation of certificates of eligibles, interview process, selections, etc.)

CATEGORY SECTION	INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED (order of category sections will vary based upon posting on USAJOBS or TAS)	CHECK (√)
Job Announcement Type:	Designate what type of JOA and set up of case file (identified with open/close date, open continuous, on-going or standing register on USAJOBS or TAS)	
Job Announcement Number:	(INSERT YOUR AGENCY'S Identification # assigned to the JOA by the TAS (if applicable))	
Job Title:	INSERT POSITION NAME and in parenthesis (USDA Pathways Recent Graduate Program) – essential for applicants to easily input in order to use the search engine to identify student opportunities	
Duty Location(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List vacancies in multiple locations: (INSERT LOCATIONS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ (CITY, STATE) ○ (CITY, STATE) ○ (CITY, STATE) <p align="center">OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List in one location: (INSERT LOCATION) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ (CITY, STATE) 	
Hiring Organization:	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	

CATEGORY SECTION	INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED (order of category sections will vary based upon posting on USAJOBS or TAS)	CHECK (√)
	(INSERT YOUR AGENCY'S FULL NAME (ACRONYM) (INSERT ANY SUB-AGENCY/OFFICE/DIVISION FULL NAME (ACRONYM))	
Occupation Code:	(INSERT SERIES)	
Pay Plan:	Federal Pay Plan – General Schedule (ideally GS Grades 4-11)	
Appointment Duration:	Recent Graduate Position	
Opening Date:	(INSERT OPEN DATE – excluding weekends & holidays)	
Closing Date:	(INSERT CLOSE DATE – excluding weekends & holidays)	
Job Status:	List status as Full-time, Part-time, Shift work, Intermittent, Job Sharing or Multiple Schedule	
Salary Min:	List as Step 1 of pay scale of lowest graded position offered	
Salary Max:	List as Step 10 of pay scale of highest graded position offered	
Salary Basis:	INSERT ANNUAL, HOURLY or INTERMITTENT SALARY	
Total Number of Openings:	LIST NUMERIC VALUE OR as “few”, “many” or “various” positions per locations by City & State (if applicable)	
Pay Grade Low:	Lowest pay grade of the position(s)	
Who May Apply:	List all that apply: Student Program Eligibles, All Groups of Qualified Individuals, Exclusive Posting (Each option provides its own canned statement that appears in the announcement).	
Job Summary:	<p>List overall description of the job being posted for the student to understand the nature of the position. Position is based on the career fields described in the job summary.</p> <p>USDA provides a well-organized worksite, ensuring the student knows and understands his/her job in order to perform effectively and efficiently. It is very important that students have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and are given specific duties and work assignments. Supervisors and/or mentors will be available to help guide the students and to ensure that assignments are performed properly. Students will be treated fairly and equitably, with dignity and respect by their supervisor. In turn, students will be expected to treat their supervisor as well as their colleagues with courtesy and respect.</p> <p>(AGENCIES WILL SELECT THOSE OCCUPATIONS AND SERIES ARE CONSIDERING HIRING UNDER THE THREE (3) CAREER FIELDS LISTED BELOW AND PROVIDE A BRIEF PARAGRAPH OF THE SUMMARIZED DUTIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE SUBSET OF CAREER FIELD TO INCLUDE IN THE VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE STUDENT(S) WILL BE PERFORMING). REMOVE ALL CAREER FIELDS AND SUBSET CAREER FIELDS NOT BEING USED/DESCRIBED/MENTIONED).</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Post all of the following:</p> <p>Most positions (paid or unpaid) will be in the following career fields. A full list of occupational title and job series can be found on USAJOBS.gov. Examples of USDA Mission Critical Occupations (MCO) and Non-MCOs:</p> <p>Management Career Fields:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration and Office Support (Series 0301-0399) & Student Trainee series - 0399 (<i>Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant, Receptionist, Mail and File Clerk, Office Automation, Administrative Clerk, Computer Clerk, Management & Program Analyst, Logistics, Communications Clerk, Program Clerk or Assistant</i>) • Financial Management (Series 0501-0599) & Student Trainee series - 	

CATEGORY SECTION	INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED (order of category sections will vary based upon posting on USAJOBS or TAS)	CHECK (√)
	<p>0599(Financial, Accounting, Auditing, Budget, Insurance Clerk or Assistant)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General (Series 0001-0099) & Student Trainee series - 0099 (Safety Technician, Outdoor Recreation Planning, Park Ranger, Environmental Protection Assistant, Fingerprint Identification, Security, Fire Protection and Prevention Clerk or Assistant) • Human Resources Management (Series 0201-0299) & Student Trainee series - 0299 (Human Resources Assistant or Clerk) • Investigation (Series 1801-1899) & Student Trainee series - 1899 (Compliance Inspection and Support, Criminal Investigation, Investigative Analyst, Agricultural Warehouse Inspection, Equal Opportunity Investigation, Consumer Safety Inspection, Food Inspection Clerk or Assistant) • Information and Arts (Series 1001-1099) & Student Trainee series - 1099 (Public Affairs, Writing and Editing, Audiovisual Clerk or Assistant) • Legal Occupations (Series 0901-0999) & Student Trainee series - 0999 (Legal or Paralegal Assistant or Clerk) <p>Agribusiness and Industry Career Fields:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business and Industry (Series 1101-1199) & Student Trainee series - 1199 (Agricultural Marketing, Agricultural Program, Procurement/Contract Financial Analyst, Loan Purchasing, Procurement, Public Utilities, Trade, Crop Insurance Administration Clerk or Assistant) • Quality Inspection (Series 1901-1999) & Student Trainee series - 1999(Agricultural Commodities Aide) • Social Science (Series 0100-0199) & Student Trainee series - 0199 (Archaeology, Economist, Economic, General Anthropology, History, Geography, Foreign Agriculture Affairs, International Relations, Psychology, Social Science, Sociology, Workforce Research and Analyst Assistant) <p>Science and Technology Fields:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biological Science (Series 0401-0499) & Student Trainee series - 0499 (Agronomy, Botany, Fish Biology, Forestry, Range Technician, Soil Conservation Technician/Soil Conservation Specialist, General Natural Resources Management and Biological Sciences Assistant) • Engineering and Architecture (Series 0801-0899) & Student Trainee series - 0899 (Agricultural Engineering, Engineering Technical, Safety Engineering, Fire Protection Engineering, Landscape Architecture, Civil Engineering, Survey Technical, Environmental Engineering, Bioengineering Assistant) • Information Technology (Series 2201-2299) & Student Training series - 2299 (various parentheticals – SYSADMIN, CUSTSPT, INFOSEC, APPSWDATAMNGT, NETWORK, etc.) Assistant or Clerk • Mathematics and Statistics (Series 1501-1599) & Student Trainee series - 	

CATEGORY SECTION	INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED (order of category sections will vary based upon posting on USAJOBS or TAS)	CHECK (√)
	<p>1599 Mathematical or Statistics Assistant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical and Health (Series 0601-0699) & Student Trainee series - 0699 (Consumer Safety, Dietitian and Nutritionist, Public Health Program Assistant) • Physical Science (Series 1301-1399) & Student Trainee series - 1399 (Food Technology, Cartographic, Land Surveying, Geology, Hydrology, Chemistry Assistant) • Veterinary and Animal Health (Series 0701-0799) & Student Trainee series - 0799 (Animal Health and Technician Veterinary Medical Science Assistant) 	
Major Duties:	Provide a brief paragraph or bullet items along with summarized duties that you want the recent graduate to perform; to inform the recent graduate of the expected activities associated with the job posting.	
Requirements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent Graduates must be at least 16 years of age. • Males born after 12/31/1959 must be registered with the Selective Service. • Must complete and pass a background and security investigation. • All requirements must be met by the closing date of this announcement. • A post-secondary certificate program must have been completed at a qualified educational institution equivalent to at least 1 academic year or full-time study that is part of an accredited college-level, technical, trade, vocational, or business school curriculum. • Education completed outside of the United States must be deemed equivalent to that gained in conventional/accredited U.S. education programs to be accepted for Federal employment. If you received a degree abroad, contact the agency to which you are applying for guidance regarding having your degree reviewed by a U.S. based credential evaluation service. • If you are a student veteran, complete the questionnaire and submit documentation (DD-214, SF-15 and proof of requested on the SF-15 if claiming 10-point Veterans' preference or DD-2014 if claiming 5 point preference or VEOA eligibility (separated under honorable conditions after 3 years or more of continuous service). • Students with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). • <p>What qualifies as an accredited educational institution? A high school or GED program whose curriculum has been approved by a state or local governing body, or a home-curriculum; and any accredited technical or vocational school, 2 or 4 year college or university, a graduate or professional, or a post secondary home school curriculum.</p> <p>Applicants may refer to the U.S. Department of Education's Institutional Accreditation System to determine whether their school/program is accredited: http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/</p>	
Evaluations:	<p>Before you submit an application for any of our vacancies, recent graduates should completely review the job description. Recent graduates should not apply for positions, if they do not meet both the required minimum qualifications AND any selective factors described in the announcement.</p> <p>If you have reviewed the announcement and believe that you can meet both the minimum qualifications and selective factors, you should document your experience and education in your résumé. Since traditional résumés do not provide all the information needed to determine your qualifications for Federal positions, you should create a more detailed résumé to use when applying for Federal positions. Your résumé</p>	

CATEGORY SECTION	INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED (order of category sections will vary based upon posting on USAJOBS or TAS)	CHECK (√)													
	<p>must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GPA • Complete course work (unit/credit hours) • Work and volunteer experience and include employment dates, salary and supervisor information • References <p>Please ensure that your resume contains your full name, country of citizenship, permanent address, contact phone number and email address.</p> <p>Salary will be determined based on academic classification using the general schedule (GS) grade (WG) levels.</p>														
Qualifications:	<p>To qualify for the USDA Pathways Recent Graduate Program, applicants must meet the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If converted to a career or career-conditional position, the selectee must be a U.S. Citizen or U.S. Permanent Resident (with proper documentation). • Must have completed a qualifying associates, bachelors, masters, professional, doctorate, vocational or technical degree or certificate from a qualifying educational institution. • Must submit unofficial transcript(s). Official transcript(s) will be required, if applicant is selected for a position). • For GPA (Agencies will INSERT the required GPA for the specific position being filled). <p>Recent graduates will be hired under the following GS levels that will determine their salary:</p> <p><u>(AGENCIES WILL CHOOSE THE GS LEVEL and standard description used for minimally qualified education /experience)</u></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="456 1144 1295 1696"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="456 1144 561 1224">GRAD E</th> <th data-bbox="561 1144 1295 1224">LEVEL OF EDUCATION</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="456 1224 561 1304">GS-4</td> <td data-bbox="561 1224 1295 1304">Completion of 2 full academic years of post-high school study or associate's degree</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="456 1304 561 1383">GS-5</td> <td data-bbox="561 1304 1295 1383">Completion of all requirements for a bachelor's degree or equivalent degree</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="456 1383 561 1484">GS-7</td> <td data-bbox="561 1383 1295 1484">Completion of 1 full academic year of graduate level education or eligibility under the Superior Academic Achievement Provision after completing a bachelor's degree</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="456 1484 561 1543">GS-9</td> <td data-bbox="561 1484 1295 1543">Completion of all requirements for a master's degree or equivalent degree</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="456 1543 561 1696" rowspan="2">GS-11</td> <td data-bbox="561 1543 1295 1623">For research positions, completion of all requirements for a master's or equivalent degree</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="561 1623 1295 1696">For non-research positions, completion of all requirements for a PhD or equivalent degree</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	GRAD E	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	GS-4	Completion of 2 full academic years of post-high school study or associate's degree	GS-5	Completion of all requirements for a bachelor's degree or equivalent degree	GS-7	Completion of 1 full academic year of graduate level education or eligibility under the Superior Academic Achievement Provision after completing a bachelor's degree	GS-9	Completion of all requirements for a master's degree or equivalent degree	GS-11	For research positions, completion of all requirements for a master's or equivalent degree	For non-research positions, completion of all requirements for a PhD or equivalent degree	
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How To Apply:	<p><u>(AGENCIES MUST DESCRIBE THE PROCESS USING SIMPLE LANGUAGE)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STEP 1 – SUBMIT RESUME: build a resume in USAJOBS or attach one from your files. Show in your résumé relevant experience and education. • STEP 2 – PERSONAL INFORMATION: fill out all information required in the vacancy announcement. 														

CATEGORY SECTION	INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED (order of category sections will vary based upon posting on USAJOBS or TAS)	CHECK (√)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STEP 3 – REVIEW: review your application for spelling and grammatical errors. • STEP 4 –SUBMIT APPLICATION: after reviewing your application, submit it. <p style="text-align: center;">ONLY electronic submissions will be accepted. None by fax or email.</p> <p>NOTES: Applicants are encouraged to complete their applications well before the application deadline to be assured of consideration.</p> <p>Applicants who apply online will automatically receive email acknowledgement of receipt of their application.</p> <p>Applications and supporting documents must be submitted by 11:59pm Eastern Standard Time on the closing date of the announcement to receive consideration.</p>	
Required Documents:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover letter (one-page maximum) (Agencies discretion). • Unofficial transcripts are accepted, but if you are offered a position, official transcripts must be submitted. • Résumé • <u>(AGENCIES WILL ADD THIS BULLET IF REQUESTING ANSWERS TO A QUESTIONNAIRE)</u> • If you are a veteran, submit documentation (DD-214, SF-15 and proof of requested on the SF-15 if claiming 10-point Veterans’ preference or DD-2014 if claiming 5 point preference or VEOA eligibility (separated under honorable conditions after 3 years or more of continuous service). • Students with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA’s TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). <p>Conditions of Employment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants are advised that false answers or omissions of information on any application materials or inability to meet the following conditions may be grounds for non-selection, withdrawal of an offer of employment, or dismissal after being employed. • All information is subject to verification. • Selection for this position is contingent upon completion of OF-306, Declaration for Federal Employment during the pre-employment process. • Selection for this position is contingent upon proof of U.S. citizenship or, for noncitizens, proof of authorization to work in the United States plus proof of entitlement to receive compensation. Additional information and guidance on the employment of non-citizens can be found at: http://www.usajobs.gov/ResourceCenter/Index/Interactive/NonCitizensEmployment#icc. For a list of documents that may be used to provide proof of citizenship or authorization to work in the United States, please refer to Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification, available at http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-9.pdf. • If not previously completed, a background security investigation will be required for all selectees. Appointment will be subject to the applicant’s successful completion of a background security investigation and favorable adjudication. Failure to successfully meet these requirements may be grounds for appropriate personnel action. In addition, if selected, a background security reinvestigation or supplemental investigation may be required at a later time. 	
What To Expect Next:	Before you submit an application for any of our vacancies, students should completely	

CATEGORY SECTION	INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED (order of category sections will vary based upon posting on USAJOBS or TAS)	CHECK (√)
	<p>review the vacancy announcement. Students should not apply for positions, if they do not meet both the required minimum qualifications and any selective factors described in the vacancy announcement.</p> <p>If you have reviewed the vacancy announcement and believe that you can meet both the minimum qualifications and selective factors, you should document your experience and education in your résumé. Since traditional résumés do not provide all the information needed to determine your qualifications for Federal positions, you should create a more detailed résumé to use when applying for Federal positions. Your résumé must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GPA • Complete course work (unit/credit hours) • Work and volunteer experience and include employment dates, salary and supervisor information • References <p>Please ensure that your resume contains your full name, country of citizenship, permanent address, contact phone number and email address.</p> <p><i>USDA Recent Graduates who study veterinary or biological science or attend an 1890 Land Grant university, 1994 Tribal College, or Hispanic Serving Institution, may be eligible for the USDA Scholars Program to receive scholarship as well as a university grant for room and board.</i></p> <p>Salary will be determined based on academic classification using the general schedule (GS) or wage grade (WG) levels.</p> <p>Salary listed is on an annual pay basis only. Locality pay will be set at time of selection based on locality location.</p> <p>Federal jobs are filled using a competitive process, understanding the timing of the process will better prepare you for the wait after you submit your application. During this time period, the Human Resources Specialists or Assistants will begin reviewing the applications received to determine if the applicants meet the qualification requirements outlined. You will be rated based on your qualifications for this position as evidenced by the education, experience, and training you report relative to this position which show the degree to which you possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities listed in this announcement. Those candidates who do meet the minimum education and work experience qualifications will then be reviewed by a number of flexibilities that are available to select candidates. Your application will be rated using Category Rating Procedures. In Category Rating, an agency will have no fewer than two rating categories - usually three. They may be named differently but are generally representative of the “Most Highly Qualified”, “Well Qualified” and “Minimally Qualified”. You will be placed in one of the categories based on your resume, education, experience and any answers to ranking questions and other factors (if applicable).</p> <p>The process can take a few days, or a few weeks, depending on the number of applications received. Once the various qualified list of candidates are identified, a “certificate of eligibles” is prepared and sent to the supervisor (or selecting official) for the position. The supervisor will then review the applications and determine who among the “best qualified” will be interviewed. Interviews are scheduled and conducted, reference and background checks are completed, and a final selection is made. The recruitment and selection process may take several weeks from the time a position is advertised or closed to when a selection is made. Do not be deterred or discouraged by this hiring timeframe. It is ok to ask questions and keep in touch with the point of contact during this time of the application process.</p> <p>As a reminder, you should always print and keep a copy of this announcement. The announcement will have the contact information for the position, which you can use to</p>	

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	<p>check further on the status of your application. Do not hesitate to ask the status of your application. Just keep in mind that the Federal hiring process does take time. Calling the Human Resources Office daily will not speed up the process. Rather, you might wait a few weeks or a month and then call for a status update. In most cases, you will be sent a notice acknowledging the receipt of your application. You will also be notified once a final selection has been made as a common practice or procedural to close out the announcement. All applicants are notified by email once a selection is made for a position. Feel free to contact: The Human Resources Specialist or Assistant assigned to the announcement to request feedback on your application if you were not referred for consideration.</p> <p>Should you be selected for an interview, you will be evaluated based upon your responses to questions provided during a structured interview. In responding to structured interview questions, you should be sure to cite specific examples of experience, explain what you did, and the outcome.</p>	
Benefits:	<p><u>(AGENCIES WILL ADD THIS INFORMATION)</u></p> <p>USDA - (<u>agency acronym here</u>) will provide the following benefits to their student hires:</p> <p>Recent graduates hired under the USDA Pathways Recent Graduate Programs for a period expected to last longer than 1 year are eligible for health and life insurance coverage as long as they are expected to be employed under this appointment for over 1 year and are expected to be in a pay status for at least one-third of the total period of time from the date of their initial appointment to the date of the completion of the Program. The cost of premiums is split between the employee and the agency, as it is for all permanent employees. (<i>See 5 CFR 870.202 for life insurance and 5 CFR 890.102 for health benefits.</i>)</p> <p>All recent graduates hired under the USDA Pathways Recent Graduate Program are entitled to benefits such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Commuter Transit Subsidy (pending the availability of budgeted funds/allocations) •Telework and/or Flexible work schedule (upon supervisor approval) 	
NOTES:	<p>Applicants are advised that false answers or omissions of information on any application materials or inability to meet the following conditions may be grounds for non-selection, withdrawal of an offer of employment, or dismissal after being employed. All information is subject to verification.</p> <p>If not previously completed, a background security investigation will be required for all selectees. Appointment will be subject to the applicant's successful completion of a background security investigation and favorable adjudication. Failure to successfully meet these requirements may be grounds for appropriate personnel action. In addition, if selected, a background security reinvestigation or supplemental investigation may be required at a later time.</p> <p>Students are encouraged to: 1) browse jobs that meet your qualifications, grade, and geographic location; 2) update your profile; 3) upload your resume; and 4) set up an account to have job openings emailed to you when a position of interest opens.</p> <p>Additional helpful hints can be found regarding information on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal Jobs by College Major and Internship/Recent Graduate Opportunities: (https://www.usajobs.gov/studentjobs); • Federal Benefits (http://www.opm.gov/insure) <p>EEO Policy Statement: http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/diversity-and-inclusion/reports/#url=Federal-Equal-Opportunity-and-Recruitment-Program</p> <p>Reasonable Accommodation Policy Statement: http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-</p>	

CATEGORY SECTION	INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED (order of category sections will vary based upon posting on USAJOBS or TAS)	CHECK (√)
	oversight/disability-employment/reasonable-accommodations/ Veterans Information: http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-authorities/veterans-authorities/#url=Overview Legal and Regulatory Guidance: https://www.usajobs.gov/Home/Sitemap	
Agency Information:	(AGENCIES WILL ADD THE DESIGNATED HUMAN RESOURCES SPECIALIST OR ASSISTANT WHO POSTED THE ANNOUNCEMENT, AS THE POINT OF CONTACT ALONG WITH A PHONE #, TDD# AND/OR E-MAIL ADDRESS TO FIELD QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS JOB OR ACCEPT INQUIRIES FROM APPLICANTS). NOTE: No applications are to be received via USAJOBS and/or TAS and not by email or fax to HR POC.	

GENERAL NOTES:

*Position is based on the career fields described in the job summary.

***Attendance at USDA recruitment and career events:**

- Accepting applications in conjunction with special events is NOT permitted due to the nature of securing personally identifiable information (PII) and it is not in compliance with OPM Pathways regulations.
- The agency may be participating in a job fair or other special event at a college or university on a given day or days. The agency will notify OHRM so that an advertisement can be placed on USAJOBS, if Pathways opportunities are available.
- In the “Pathways JOA”, the agency may redirect the candidate to the agency’s website in which applicants are informed about the job fair or special event and provided information about applying.
- At the special event, the agency may direct candidates to the agency’s website to apply or utilize another method by which applications are received.
- Public notice has been met because the opportunity is posted on the “Students and Recent Graduates” section of USAJOBS for the same number of days it is posted on the agency’s website.

***Below are examples of ways in which agencies can meet the public notice requirement and still have the flexibility in approaches for receiving applications:**

- Applying directly through a “Pathways JOA” on USAJOBS. In this case, the agency desires to have the “Pathways JOA” contain all information about the opportunity and how to apply. The candidate is then directed from the “Pathways JOA” to the agency’s back end system to apply (i.e. Talent Acquisition System – TAS).

Considerations:

- Using an automated system provides structure and guides candidates through specific processes the agency may require. It allows agencies to track its applicants by vacancy and makes it easier to retrieve data on its recruitment efforts at a later date.
- Some candidates view the use of automated systems (as opposed to sending in a resume) in a negative light and may be reluctant to apply. Job seekers are encouraged to put their resume and supporting documentation on USAJOBS AND TAS.

***Apply through another means after viewing the “Pathways JOA.”**

- In this case, the candidate views the opportunity on USAJOBS through the “Pathways JOA”.
- The candidate is then advised under “How to Apply” to go to the agency’s website to learn more about the vacancy and apply under the agency’s desired method.

Considerations:

- Provides maximum flexibility to the agency and may be attractive to candidates because it conveys ease of use and similarities to methods for job applications in the private sector.
- This may be an optimal approach if an agency is using the “Pathways JOA” to advertise several opportunities in multiple series or occupational specialties and candidates are directed to the agency’s website to apply as opposed to applying directly from the JOA itself.
- Agencies are not able to track easily the data on number of applicants per vacancy, etc. since applications are not being accepted through an automated system.

11 - Exhibit 20



**U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
Recruitment and Outreach Advertisement
Agency Posting Desk-Aid**

The USDA Recruitment and Outreach Advertisement Desk-Aid for Agencies is intended to be of ease for HR Professionals to use to list Recruitment and Outreach events that they plan to host or attend on USAJOBS. The automated system being used to advertise recruitment or outreach events will drive the fields where specific information is entered. Postings are listed as an advertisement (AD) on USAJOBS and the “apply online” feature is not applicable since it is not a job opportunity announcement (JOA) and therefore will not utilize your Talent Acquisition System (TAS). This desk-aid has been designed to make less work for the HR Professional by posting one ad per calendar month (with the ability of adjusting or adding events in a particular month) and has the flexibility to delete stale dated events if the HR Professional desires to adjust before the end of the month. Mission Areas/Agencies/Offices must follow the Departmental Management (DM) issued Desk-Aid to publically announce their intention to host or participate in external or internal events such as career/job fairs, conferences, college campus visits and/or any other similar venues in the future.

ADVERTISEMENT (AD)

CATEGORY SECTION	INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED (order of category sections will vary based upon posting on USAJOBS or TAS)	CHECK (√)
Job Announcement Type:	Designate as Recruitment and Outreach Event on case file folder established ((identifying with open/close date on USAJOBS, etc.)	
Job Announcement Number:	(INSERT YOUR AGENCY’S Identification # assigned to the AD by the TAS (if applicable)	
Job Title:	USDA/ (INSERT YOUR AGENCY’S NAME (ACRONYM) Recruitment and Outreach Event(s) for (INSERT MONTH/YEAR)– NOTE: This is essential for job seekers to easily use the USAJOBS search engine to locate upcoming USDA recruitment and outreach event opportunities	
Duty Location(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List events that will occur in multiple locations: (INSERT LOCATIONS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ (CITY, STATE) - ABC University Career Fair (11/01/12) ○ (CITY, STATE) - XYZ Community College Job Fair (11/02/12) ○ (CITY, STATE) – 123 Junior College Federal Expo (11/03/12) <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List in one location: (INSERT LOCATION) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ (CITY, STATE) – Main Street Law School Career Fair (11/04/12) 	
Hiring Organization:	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) (INSERT YOUR AGENCY’S FULL NAME (ACRONYM) (INSERT ANY SUB-AGENCY/OFFICE/DIVISION FULL NAME (ACRONYM)	
Occupation Code:	(INSERT SERIES) if applicable	
Pay Plan:	Federal Pay Plan – General Schedule (GS Grades 1-15) if applicable	
Appointment Duration:	Not applicable	
Opening Date:	(INSERT OPEN DATE) –first day of month – regardless if weekend or holiday	
Closing Date:	(INSERT CLOSE DATE) – last day of month – regardless if weekend or holiday	
Job Status:	List status as Full-time, Part-time, Shift work, Intermittent, Job Sharing or Multiple Schedule (if applicable)	
Salary Min:	\$0.00 (NOTE: Some TAS automatically populate a Step 1 salary if a series and grade is added, if so, use the RUS pay chart due to monthly list of events may be nationwide AND please add narrative below regarding there are no salaries associated with the AD)	
Salary Max:	\$0.00 (NOTE: Some TAS automatically populate a Step 10 salary if a series and grade is added, if so, use the RUS pay chart due to monthly list of events may be nationwide AND please add narrative below regarding there are no salaries associated with the AD)	
Salary Basis:	INSERT PER YEAR, HOUR or INTERMITTENT SALARY (NOTE: Some TAS automatically populate a salary basis if a series and grade is added, if so, please use the RUS pay chart due to monthly list of events may be nationwide AND please add narrative below regarding there are no salaries associated with the AD)	
Total Number of Openings:	Not Applicable for posting AD (NOTE: Some TAS automatically populate the total number of openings, if so, list as #1)	
Pay Grade Low:	Not Applicable for posting AD (see section on “salary min”).	
Who May Apply:	<u>List all that apply or delete those listed below that do not apply:</u> Open All Sources (i.e. Student Program Eligibles, All Groups of Qualified Individuals, Schedule A Eligibles, etc.) and Merit Promotion Eligibles (individuals with Veterans Preference, etc.).	
Job Summary:	<u>USDA/(list sub agency acronym here) will attend several recruitment and outreach events throughout the United States in (INSERT MONTH/YEAR HERE).</u> <u>List the following:</u> DATE OF THE EVENT, NAME OF EVENT, LOCATION (City and State Only) and	

CATEGORY SECTION	INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED (order of category sections will vary based upon posting on USAJOBS or TAS)	CHECK (√)
	<p>WEBSITE (www.name and not detailed link)</p> <p><u>NOTE: Applicant will have responsibility to search internet for more detailed information (i.e., directions, hours, participant fees, other FAQs, etc.)</u></p> <p><u>ADD new or DELETE stale dated post events accordingly for a given MONTH/YEAR during calendar month vacancy announcement is open.</u></p>	
Major Duties:	<p><u>Major duties would only be listed if attending an event for direct hiring authority purposes. Otherwise list the following in the recruitment and outreach ad:</u></p> <p>THERE IS NO SALARY ASSOCIATED WITH OUR OPM PUBLIC NOTICE REQUIREMENT TO POST OUR HOSTING OR ATTENDANCE AT AN UPCOMING RECRUITMENT AND/OR OUTREACH EVENT. THERE ARE NO MAJOR DUTIES ASSOCIATED WITH THIS ADVERTISEMENT.</p> <p>NO CURRENT OPENINGS ARE DIRECTLY ASSOCIATED TO THIS ADVERTISEMENT.</p> <p>THIS ADVERTISEMENT IS NOT CONSIDERED TO BE CONTINUOUS, ON-GOING OR STANDING REGISTER AND IS NOT A RESUME RESPOSITORY. RESUMES AND APPLICATIONS ARE NOT BEING ACCEPTED ONLINE, VIA MAIL OR VIA FAX.</p> <p>CURRENT USDA EMPLOYEES WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED UNDER THIS ADVERTISEMENT.</p> <p>This advertisement will be used to recruit for current and future positions as mentioned in the “Other Information” section of this advertisement. Descriptions of job titles and duties are general in nature. Specific responsibilities listed may not apply to positions under job category by series or grade level. Additional information on position details will be provided if found best qualified under an official USDA vacancy announcement on USAJOBS and if selected for an interview, etc.</p>	
Requirements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If converted to a career or career-conditional position, the selectee must be a U.S. Citizen or U.S. Permanent Resident (with proper documentation). • Males born after 12/31/1959 must be registered with the Selective Service*. • Must complete and pass a background and security investigation. • Must be enrolled at least ½ time or accepted as a degree seeking student*. • Must submit unofficial transcript(s) (official transcript(s) will be required, if applicant is selected for a position)* <p>* If deemed applicable</p>	
Evaluations:	<p>Employment seekers will ONLY prepare and submit applications for job consideration using on-line application for specific vacancy announcement positions that are currently listed on www.usda.gov or www.usajobs.gov.</p>	
Qualifications:	<p>Listed below is a sample of grade levels targeting student and career employment opportunities that are paid or unpaid opportunities in the future. Grade levels will vary based upon minimum qualifications for position and/or experience based upon knowledge, skills and abilities or competencies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GS-1: Enrollment in a high school diploma or GED program. • GS-2: High school diploma or equivalent • GS-3: Completion of 1 full academic year of post-high school study • GS-4: Completion of 2 full academic years of post-high school 	

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	<p>study or associate's degree</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GS-5: Completion of all requirements for a bachelor's degree or equivalent degree • GS-7: Completion of 1 full academic year of graduate level education or eligibility under the Superior Academic Achievement Provision after completing a bachelor's degree • GS-9: Completion of all requirements for a master's degree or equivalent degree • GS-11: For research positions, completion of all requirements for a master's or equivalent degree. For non-research positions, completion of all requirements for a PhD or equivalent degree <p><u>NOTE: HR Professional may have to adjust qualification requirements if targeting positions that are GS-12-15 and/or WG positions)</u></p>	
<p>How To Apply:</p>	<p>What recruitment and outreach events are we participating in the future?</p> <p><u>USDA/(list sub agency acronym here) will attend several recruitment and outreach events throughout the United States in (INSERT MONTH/YEAR HERE).</u></p> <p>The DATE OF THE EVENT, NAME OF EVENT, LOCATION (City and State Only) AND WEBSITE has been provided in the "Job Summary" section of this advertisement.</p> <p>Student and career employment seekers will have responsibility to search the internet for more detailed information (i.e. directions, hours, attendance fees (if applicable), etc.</p>	
<p>Required Documents:</p>	<p>Employment seekers will ONLY prepare and submit applications for job consideration using on-line application for specific vacancy announcement positions that are currently listed on www.usda.gov or www.usajobs.gov.</p>	
<p>What To Expect Next:</p>	<p>THERE IS NO SALARY ASSOCIATED WITH OUR OPM PUBLIC NOTICE REQUIREMENT TO POST OUR HOSTING OR ATTENDANCE AT AN UPCOMING RECRUITMENT AND/OR OUTREACH EVENT.</p> <p><i>USDA Student Trainees and Recent Graduates who study veterinary or biological science or attend an 1890 Land Grant university, 1994 Tribal College, or Hispanic Serving Institution, may be eligible for the USDA Scholars Program to receive scholarship as well as a university grant for room and board.</i></p> <p>THERE ARE NO MAJOR DUTIES ASSOCIATED WITH THIS ADVERTISEMENT.</p> <p>NO CURRENT OPENINGS ARE DIRECTLY ASSOCIATED TO THIS ADVERTISEMENT.</p> <p>THIS ADVERTISEMENT IS NOT CONSIDERED TO BE CONTINUOUS, ONGOING OR STANDING REGISTER AND IS NOT A RESUME RESPOSITORY. RESUMES AND APPLICATIONS ARE NOT BEING ACCEPTED ONLINE, VIA MAIL OR VIA FAX.</p> <p>CURRENT USDA EMPLOYEES WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED UNDER THIS ADVERTISEMENT.</p> <p>This advertisement will be used to recruit for current and future positions as mentioned</p>	

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	<p>in the “Other Information” section of this advertisement. Descriptions of job titles and duties are general in nature. Specific responsibilities listed may not apply to positions under job category by series or grade level. Additional information on position details will be provided if found best qualified under an official vacancy announcement and if selected for an interview.</p> <p>EEO Policy Statement: http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/diversity-and-inclusion/reports/#url=Federal-Equal-Opportunity-and-Recruitment-Program</p> <p>Reasonable Accommodation Policy Statement: http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/disability-employment/reasonable-accommodations/</p> <p>Veterans Information: http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-authorities/veterans-authorities/#url=Overview</p> <p>Legal and Regulatory Guidance: https://www.usajobs.gov/Home/Sitemap</p>	
Benefits:	THERE ARE NO BENEFITS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS ADVERTISEMENT.	
Other Information:	<p>Who are we?</p> <p>The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) employs more than 100,000 employees worldwide within 19 agencies and 16 administrative offices. Some of the 19 agencies are grouped, based on the missions, into 7 Mission Areas. Student and career employment seekers are encouraged to learn more about USDA’s Mission Areas, Agencies and Offices at http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome.</p> <p>USDA has created a strategic plan to implement its vision. The framework of this plan depends on these key activities: expanding markets for agriculture products and support international economic development, further developing alternative markets for agricultural products and activities, providing financing needed to help expand job opportunities and improve housing, utilities and infrastructure in rural America, enhancing food safety by taking steps to reduce the prevalence of food borne hazards from farm to table, improving nutrition and health by providing food assistance and nutrition education and promotion, and managing and protecting America’s public and private lands working cooperatively with other levels of government and the private sector.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“USDA Serving the American public – every day, in every way”</i></p> <p>What career opportunities do we offer?</p> <p>USDA offers different opportunities for students, recent graduates and career employment seekers in the management, agribusiness and industry, and science and technology career fields that are considered to be Mission Critical Occupations (MCOs). However, USDA has several professional, administrative, technical, and clerical and other positions that are in support of the mission that are on a General Schedule (GS) pay scale.</p> <p><u>INSERT YOUR AGENCY’S NAME</u> is seeking individuals for recruitment and outreach purposes in the following career fields:</p> <p><u>(SELECT ONLY THOSE OCCUPATIONS AND SERIES YOU ARE CONSIDERING HIRING FOR UNDER THE THREE (3) CAREER FIELDS LISTED BELOW AND PROVIDE A BRIEF PARAGRAPH OF THE SUMMARIZED DUTIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE SUBSET OF CAREER FIELD TO INCLUDE IN THE VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT. REMOVE ALL CAREER FIELDS AND SUBSET CAREER FIELDS NOT BEING USED/DESCRIBED/MENTIONED).</u></p> <p>OR</p> <p>Post all of the following:</p>	

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	<p>Most positions (paid or unpaid) will be in the following career fields. A full list of occupational title and job series can be found on USAJOBS.gov. Examples of USDA Mission Critical Occupations (MCO) and Non-MCOs:</p> <p>Management Career Fields:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration and Office Support (Series 0301-0399) & Student Trainee series - 0399 (<i>Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant, Receptionist, Mail and File Clerk, Office Automation, Administrative Clerk, Computer Clerk, Management & Program Analyst, Logistics, Communications Clerk, Program Clerk or Assistant</i>) • Financial Management (Series 0501-0599) & Student Trainee series - 0599(<i>Financial, Accounting, Auditing, Budget, Insurance Clerk or Assistant</i>) • General (Series 0001-0099) & Student Trainee series - 0099 (<i>Safety Technician, Outdoor Recreation Planning, Park Ranger, Environmental Protection Assistant, Fingerprint Identification, Security, Fire Protection and Prevention Clerk or Assistant</i>) • Human Resources Management (Series 0201-0299) & Student Trainee series - 0299 (<i>Human Resources Assistant or Clerk</i>) • Investigation (Series 1801-1899) & Student Trainee series - 1899 (<i>Compliance Inspection and Support, Criminal Investigation, Investigative Analyst, Agricultural Warehouse Inspection, Equal Opportunity Investigation, Consumer Safety Inspection, Food Inspection Clerk or Assistant</i>) • Information and Arts (Series 1001-1099) & Student Trainee series - 1099 (<i>Public Affairs, Writing and Editing, Audiovisual Clerk or Assistant</i>) • Legal Occupations (Series 0901-0999) & Student Trainee series - 0999 (<i>Legal or Paralegal Assistant or Clerk</i>) <p>Agribusiness and Industry Career Fields:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business and Industry (Series 1101-1199) & Student Trainee series - 1199 (<i>Agricultural Marketing, Agricultural Program, Procurement/Contract Financial Analyst, Loan Purchasing, Procurement, Public Utilities, Trade, Crop Insurance Administration Clerk or Assistant</i>) • Quality Inspection (Series 1901-1999) & Student Trainee series - 1999(<i>Agricultural Commodities Aide</i>) • Social Science (Series 0100-0199) & Student Trainee series - 0199 (<i>Archaeology, Economist, Economic, General Anthropology, History, Geography, Foreign Agriculture Affairs, International Relations, Psychology, Social Science, Sociology, Workforce Research and Analyst Assistant</i>) <p>Science and Technology Fields:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biological Science (Series 0401-0499) & Student Trainee series - 0499 (<i>Agronomy, Botany, Fish Biology, Forestry, Range Technician, Soil Conservation Technician/Soil Conservation Specialist, General Natural Resources Management and Biological Sciences Assistant</i>) • Engineering and Architecture (Series 0801-0899) & Student Trainee series - 0899 (<i>Agricultural Engineering, Engineering Technical, Safety Engineering, Fire Protection Engineering, Landscape Architecture, Civil Engineering, Survey Technical, Environmental Engineering, Bioengineering Assistant</i>) • Information Technology (Series 2201-2299) & Student Training series - 2299 (various parentheticals – SYSADMIN, CUSTSPT, INFOSEC, APPSWDATAMNGT, NETWORK, etc.) Assistant or Clerk • Mathematics and Statistics (Series 1501-1599) & Student Trainee series - 1599 Mathematical or Statistics Assistant • Medical and Health (Series 0601-0699) & Student Trainee series - 0699 (<i>Consumer Safety, Dietitian and Nutritionist, Public Health Program Assistant</i>) 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical Science (Series 1301-1399) & Student Trainee series - 1399 (<i>Food Technology, Cartographic, Land Surveying, Geology, Hydrology, Chemistry Assistant</i>) • Veterinary and Animal Health (Series 0701-0799) & Student Trainee series - 0799 (<i>Animal Health and Technician Veterinary Medical Science Assistant</i>) 	
Agency Information:	<p>NOTE: Limit details that provided for agency contact info, since it should be rare that any job seeker needs to reach us. Job seekers will tend to call about the ad and the status of other JOAs, etc. If something is wrong with the posting, internally people can reach us. It is suggest that we only list acronym for division or office, city, state and zip code with no Agency POC details such as name, phone # or email.</p> <p>Or Post with caution:</p> <p>AGENCIES CAN ADD THE DESIGNATED HUMAN RESOURCES SPECIALIST/ASSISTANT, VARIOUS DIVERSITY & INCLUSION SPECIALISTS, SPECIAL EMPHASIS PROGRAM COORDINATORS, EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM MANAGERS, RECRUITERS, ETC. WHO POSTED THE ADVERTISEMENT AS THE POINT OF CONTACT ALONG WITH A PHONE #, TDD# AND/OR E-MAIL ADDRESS TO FIELD QUESTIONS OR ACCEPT INQUIRIES FROM JOB SEEKERS). It would only be recommended to post agency point of contact if by posting it would be a source of information for anyone seeking a One-USDA approach for partnering or logistical assistance from USDA employees in the local commuting area of the recruitment and outreach event(s) listed in this advertisement.</p>	