

# HOW TO APPLY TO STATE GOVERNMENT JOBS & INTERNSHIPS

There are a lot of benefits to working for state government agencies. They are often known for stability, work-life balance, good insurance, retirement and other benefits. Additionally, a lot of state agencies focus on social causes students care about like the environment, housing, public health and more. So how do you get in with a state agency?

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## 1

### **Become a Known Candidate through Networking.**

If state recruiters know who you are, they are much more likely to pay attention to your application. Ask for informational interviews with agencies of interest, meet recruiters at career fairs, connect with employees (especially Beavers) on LinkedIn, attend agency workshops or volunteer events, and reach out to hiring managers to express interest and ask questions.

## 2

### **Know Where to Look.**

Unlike federal positions that are all collected together on USAJobs.gov, state government jobs can be found on each state's own official jobs website (e.g., <https://www.oregon.gov/jobs>). Filter by location, job type, agency or keyword. There is also often a listing of the different agencies that exist for each state (e.g. **Oregon** and **Washington**). Make sure to sign up for *job alerts* to be sent to your inbox so you don't miss positions with narrow application windows! Consider applying to less popular working locations to increase your odds of getting an interview.

## 3

### **Create a Tailored Resume (Different than Federal).**

Don't use the same resume for every job; match your qualifications to the job ad. And DON'T be humble. If you are in the ballpark of qualified, apply and make a good case for your experience and education. States usually require a resume and/or an online application.

#### **Resume Tips:**

- Incorporate keywords from the job ad very explicitly into your resume and ensure evidence of *ALL minimum qualifications are included*.
- List experience chronologically using month-year format. State employers need to calculate your years of experience and they do this with clear chronological dates.
- Don't reuse your federal resume. Avoid federal resume features like hours worked per week, GS-levels, etc., unless requested.
- Include up-to-date contact information for yourself and former supervisors.
- Include highly detailed bullet points that don't just explain what you did, but how, with whom and numbers/statistics to quantify your results.
- Include all relevant licenses, clearances and/or certifications.
- State government resumes are often longer than private sector. The one page rule does NOT apply. Be thorough. Be explicit about your experience.
- Unpaid experience counts! Include volunteering, class projects, coursework, etc. Avoid fancy or colorful fonts, styles, and formatting – choose a simple layout.

**4****Include All Required Documents.**

You may need a cover letter, letters of recommendation, licenses/certificates, state ID or driver's license, proof of residence, transcripts, military documents, etc. depending on the instructions. Include a cover letter even if it's listed as "optional." One of the biggest reasons an applicant gets rejected is missing required content.

**5****Follow the Application Process & Show Evidence of Minimum Qualifications.**

There's no one-size-fits-all here. Each state has its own process. Read instructions thoroughly. Most states are very focused on applicants meeting minimum qualifications.

**Merit-Based Evaluation Systems:**

There are many states (such as *California*) that require you to pass an examination or assessment (e.g., written tests, interviews, in-person testing, performance tests, experience evaluations). Your score determines which positions you are eligible to apply for. Lower scores can still yield successful applications depending on how many candidates apply to a job.

**6****Do a Government Internship or Fellowship**

to increase your odds of being hired full-time someday. These are great learning experiences and a way to expand your network. All the job principles and tips in this document also apply to internship applications.

**7****Show Your Commitment to Public Service and the Mission of the Agency.**

Demonstrate your passion for helping the public, volunteering, etc. Many people do government work because they care about making a difference for real people and issues. Show that you care about what they care about.

**8****Be Patient. Look Carefully at Job Classifications.**

Most state government jobs have a complicated hiring process and receive a lot of candidates. It may take a while for them to get back to you. Don't hesitate to follow up about next steps. Also note that state governments often use general job titles like "program analyst," "project coordinator," or "specialist," but these may refer to very different jobs. Read job descriptions carefully to determine your interest and fit. You can often research salaries, position titles and classifications (e.g., <https://www.oregon.gov/das/hr/pages/cc.aspx>).

**9****Be Aware of Hiring Statuses & Citizenship.**

Unlike federal agencies, some state agencies may consider hiring *non-citizens/international students*. But don't assume, policies vary. It's a good question to ask during interviews. Note that statuses like being a *person with a disability or a veteran* may gain you a hiring preference on state applications (such as skipping ahead to the interview phase). Make sure to include these statuses on your application.

**10****Take Advantage of Help & Resources.**

Government applications are competitive and tricky. It can be a good idea to review yours with the career counselor for your college. You can make an appointment with them through *Handshake*. You can also attend career fairs and webinars OSU offers through Handshake to learn about and network with government agencies.