

# Frequently Asked Questions: USDA Digital Service Hiring

## Getting Hired

### **Who is eligible to apply?**

Applicants must be a U.S. citizen (including dual citizenship) or a U.S. national (a resident of American Samoa and Swain Island). All applicants must be able to pass a public trust background check.

USDA DS does not discriminate in employment based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy and gender identity) national origin, political affiliation, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, genetic information, age, membership in an employee organization, retaliation, parental status, military service, or other non-merit factors. More information is available at the [Office of Equal Opportunity](#).

### **What do I need to apply?**

Job announcements will list all application requirements. Typically, you will need to provide a resume and any other applicable document(s), such as prior SF-50s (a form that shows current or previous federal employment), DD214 (a document related to previous military service if applying for veteran's preference), or a portfolio of work.

### **What kind of resume do I need?**

USDA DS encourages applicants to provide a resume that outlines your skills, experience, and impact in a concise manner (no more than 3-5 pages). We accept federal-style resumes, but they are not required.

### **Where do I apply?**

Applications for each of our 3 tracks: 1) Digital Service Experts, 2) CX Strategists, and 3) Procurement Strategists, will be available on the USDA Digital Service Fellows Program Website and on [USAJobs.gov](#). Applicants will be able to apply for multiple tracks at the same time. Announcement will be posted on our website as they become live.

### **Where can I find job descriptions?**

Position descriptions for each of our roles are available on each job announcement via [USAJobs.gov](#). Please refer to our website for updates or reach out to [USDADigitalService@usda.gov](mailto:USDADigitalService@usda.gov).

### **How will I be evaluated?**

The USDA DS hiring process consists of three parts: 1) a Subject Matter Expert (SME) resume qualifications review, 2) an SME structured interview, and 3) an agency match interview.

### **How does USDA DS conduct interviews?**

Candidates will be interviewed by a panel of subject matter experts to ensure that a candidate meets position qualifications. Interviews are typically conducted in one-hour increments over the phone or a web-based platform.

### **What support is available during the application process?**

Candidates will be able to communicate with a USDA DS team member throughout the entire hiring process. If you require an accommodation, please do not hesitate to let us know. A reasonable accommodation may include requesting an interview format other than phone interview, requesting extended breaks between interviews, or requesting for a sign language interpreter. USDA provides

reasonable accommodation to applicants with disabilities on a case-by-case basis. Candidates requiring reasonable accommodation for any part of the application and hiring process should contact the Agency Contact listed in the job announcement.

### **How long will the application review and hiring process take?**

Submitted resumes and applications will be reviewed by our technical recruiters on a rolling basis. After the final agency match interview(s), if you are selected to be a USDA Digital Service Fellow, our team will work with you throughout the selection and onboarding process.

Below are approximations of the hiring timeframe, starting at the point when a particular announcement period for positions is closed. Please be aware that depending on individual circumstances, this may look different for each applicant.

### **Does the USDA DS offer internships?**

The USDA DS welcomes interns to work with our team. All interns must be currently enrolled in a degree program. For more information, please contact [USDADigitalService@usda.gov](mailto:USDADigitalService@usda.gov).

### **I wasn't selected. When can I reapply?**

Candidates that are not selected must wait for one calendar year prior to reapplying. When reapplying, candidates must provide an updated resume.

## **Relocation**

### **Where would I be able to work?**

Positions will be located either remotely within the United States or in Washington, DC. Up to 20% travel will be expected on an annual basis.

### **Does the USDA DS cover relocation expenses?**

No. USDA DS does not provide relocation incentives.

## **Onboarding**

### **What does the security clearance process include?**

All government positions require background checks. Most roles at USDA require a public trust position clearance, which may be more thorough than most private-sector background checks. Our USDA HR and Digital Service teams will guide you through the process.

### **How will I see the status of my background check?**

USDA DS does not have insight into candidates' background investigations. All communications will come from our security partners. The security team will reach out once they have reviewed your materials or need additional information.

### **How will I know if I passed my background check?**

USDA HR will provide a formal position offer letter stating that you have passed your background check. You should hear from the individuals in HR that provided your tentative offer.

### **How will I receive my job offer?**

After an initial satisfactory review, candidates will receive a tentative offer that is conditional upon a cleared background security check from our USDA Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM). The entire process is as follows:

1. A USDA HR specialist will contact you with a tentative offer. "Tentative" means the offer is contingent on a security clearance. This offer will include salary for your consideration. At this point, you should not give notice or resign from your current employer. You should delay these steps until you receive the final offer with a confirmed start date from HR.

2. You will receive email communications from the USAStaffing. You must log-in to the system and accept your tentative offer.
3. You must complete some required forms and will receive an email from USAccess with instructions on how to schedule a fingerprinting appointment for your security clearance.
4. Once your paperwork has cleared, you will receive an interim security clearance, and a USDA HR specialist will contact you with a formal offer.
5. At this stage, USDA's OHRM and our Digital Service team will work with you to identify and set a start date.

### **How long will onboarding take?**

Onboarding can take several weeks depending on completion of a required background check. Our team will be with you every step of the way to keep you up to date throughout the process.

## **The USDA Digital Service Experience**

### **How will I spend my fellowship at USDA DS?**

No two Fellows will have the same experiences at the USDA Digital Service. Some fellows will be assigned to work directly with the USDA Digital Service or USDA OCX teams, while others, depending on need, will be detailed to other USDA agencies and mission areas. Each fellow's experience will change depending on agency needs and priorities.

### **Does USDA DS have a dress code?**

Depending on where Fellows are assigned to work, dress codes may vary. In the office, we encourage business casual attire, though more formal attire may be appropriate for meetings with leadership and key stakeholders. When in doubt, ask your manager for assistance with gauging appropriate attire.

### **What's the culture like at the USDA Digital Service?**

Members of the USDA DS share a common goal of working for the public good and are passionate about the work they do to support U.S. Agriculture.

### **Can I visit USDA's offices in Washington, D.C.?**

Candidates that have received a tentative offer are welcome to visit USDA headquarters. Please reach out to Shara Kenner at [shara.kenner@usda.gov](mailto:shara.kenner@usda.gov) for more information.