



USDA Office of Contracting and Procurement (OCP)

**PROCUREMENT TRAINEE
PROGRAM (PTP)**

Information Session

Welcome and Logistics

- Welcome!
- All attendees are in listen-only mode
- Submit questions by using the Q&A button in Teams
- To see Live Captions, use the ellipses (...) at the top of Teams
- Today's presentation slides will be uploaded to the USDA OCP Procurement Trainee Program website at <https://www.usda.gov/da/ocp/ptp> within 24 hours

Topics

- Introductions
- USDA Overview
- USDA Contracting and PTP Overview
- Eligibility and How to Apply
- What We're Looking For
- Timing
- Open Q&A (30 minutes)

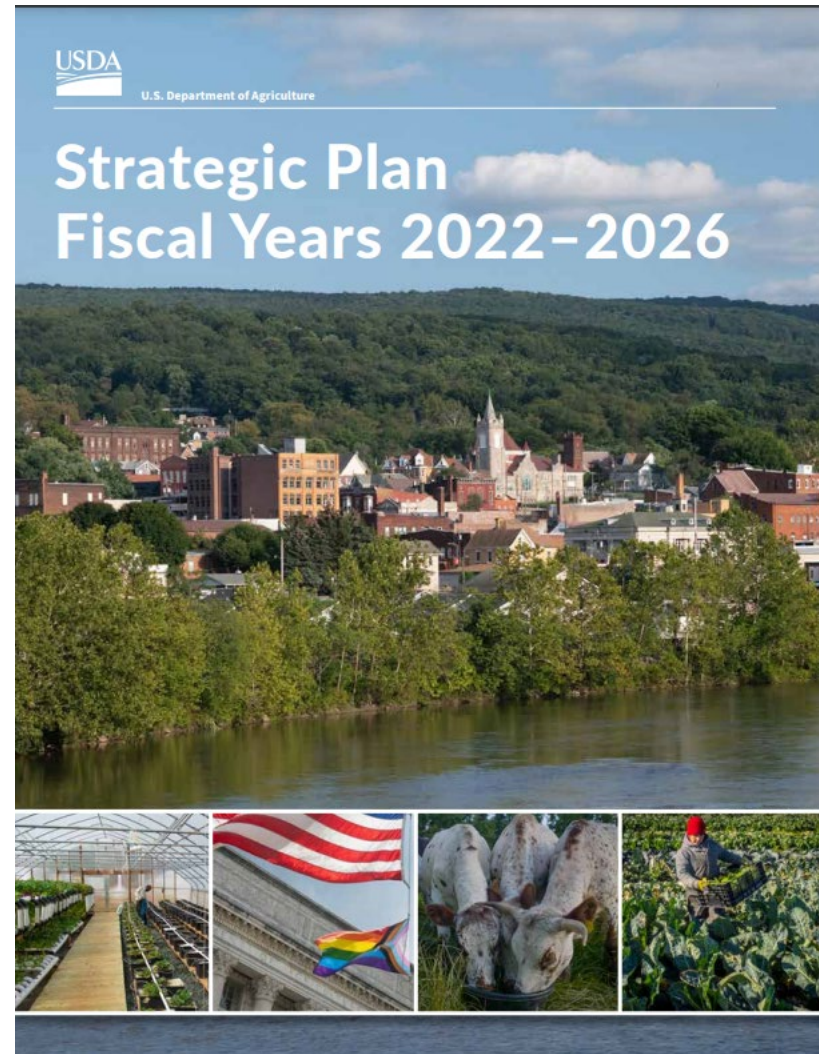
Introductions

- **Donald Baker, Jr.**, Deputy Director, OCP
- **Nicole White**, Operations Branch Chief, Human Resources Management
- **Eleanor Pontoriero**, USDA Contract Specialist

USDA Overview

USDA Mission: To serve all Americans by providing effective, innovative, science-based public policy leadership in agriculture, food and nutrition, natural resource protection and management, rural development, and related issues with a commitment to deliverable equitable and climate-smart opportunities that inspire and help America thrive.

[USDA Strategic Plan](#) identifies strategic goals and objectives for the Department for Fiscal Years 2022-2026



USDA Core Values

- **Respect and Dignity:** We treat all people with courtesy and respect, and we value the inherent dignity of every individual.
- **Equity and Inclusion:** We seek to end discrimination in all forms, wherever it exists, and expand services and opportunities to underserved people and communities across America, starting with our workforce.
- **Trust and Integrity:** We act in a manner that is deserving of the public's trust and with the utmost integrity in everything we do as public servants.
- **Service and Results:** We listen to our internal and external customers and actively incorporate their ideas on how to best reach our diverse customers and deliver service that significantly and positively impacts the lives of all Americans.
- **Science Leadership:** We base our decisions and policy on science and data that are reliable, timely, relevant and free from political interference.

USDA Mission Areas

Farm Production
and
Conservation
(FPAC)

Food, Nutrition,
and Consumer
Services

Food Safety

Marketing and
Regulatory
Programs

Natural
Resources and
Environment

Research,
Education, and
Economics

Rural
Development

Trade and
Foreign
Agricultural
Affairs

Departmental
Staff Offices

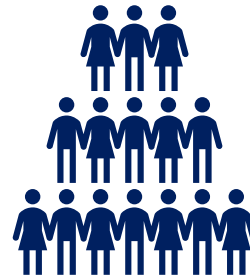
Additional Information on USDA Mission Areas and
Agencies available at [Mission Areas | USDA](#)

USDA Contracting



Spent over \$10 Billion in Fiscal Year 2022 on over 66K contracts

Workforce includes Contracting staff, Contracting Officer Representatives (CORs) and program offices



Support small businesses through federal contracting, with over 64% of contract dollars awarded to small businesses

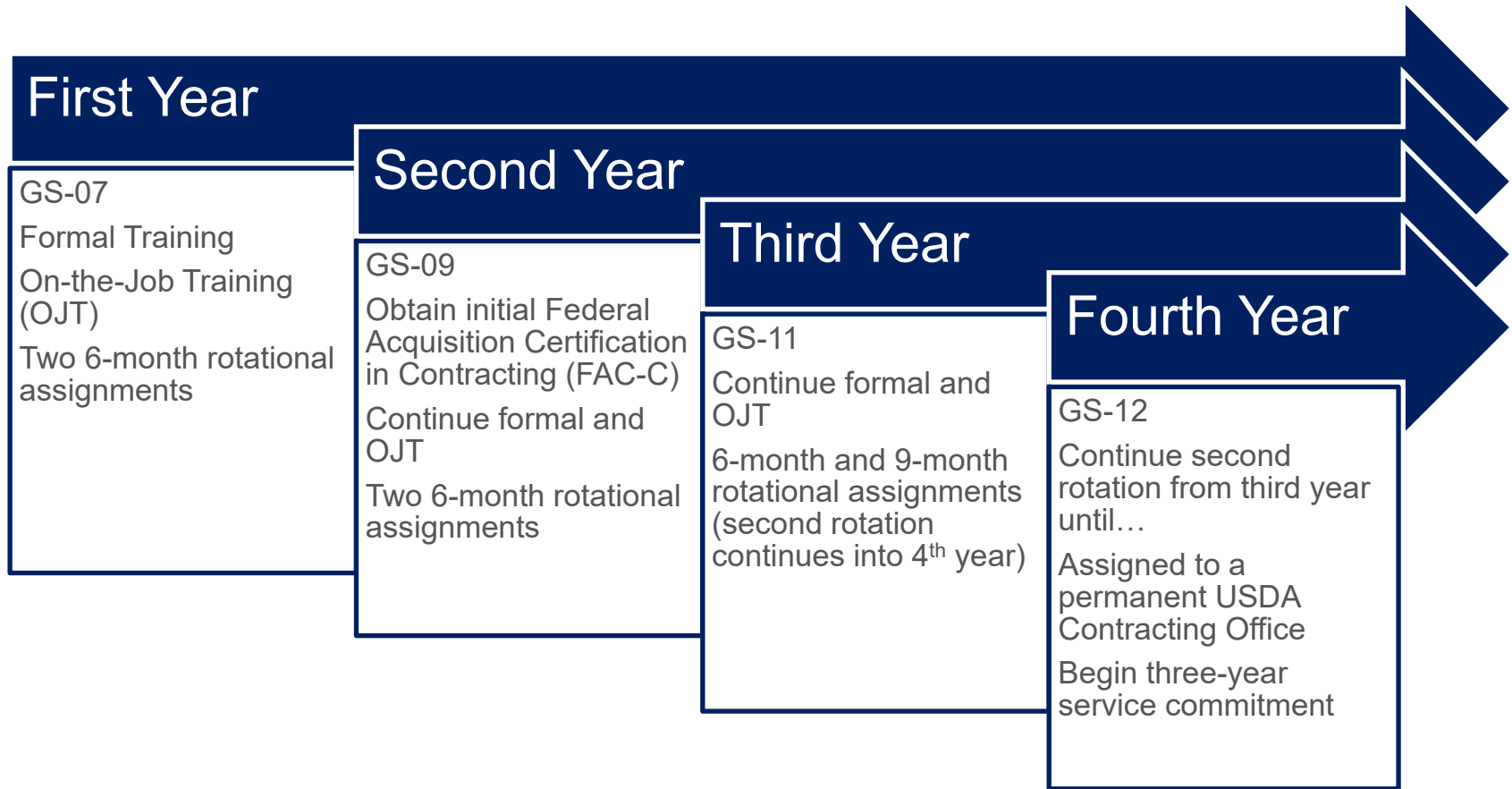
- USDA has over 740 GS-1102 Contract Specialists who award and administer contracts for USDA Mission Areas
- Contracting works with program offices to award contracts that deliver the mission – for example, fire suppression, food safety, agriculture R&D, and many more

PTP Overview

- PTP positions are in the contracting field (GS-1102), with the job title Contract Specialist.
- Positions are permanent, full-time, and **REMOTE** – meaning you can work from anywhere in the continental United States.
- All selected employees will start at the GS-07 level, which offers a starting salary of \$44K to \$58K. Salaries are dependent on work location and prior salary history.
- Over 3 years, employees progress to the GS-12 level, which offers a starting salary of \$79K or higher, again dependent on duty location.
- PTP employees will be provided with the training and experience needed to obtain a Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting (FAC-C).
- USDA makes a significant time and resource investment in PTP employees and requires that PTP participants sign a 3-year [Continued Service Agreement](#), requiring the employee to work for USDA for at least three years after completion of the program.

PTP Progression

Prior to official offer, must pass a background check and complete a Continued Service Agreement



USDA Benefits

- Meaningful work in support of American public
- Equity and inclusion is a high priority
- USDA will invest in your career development
- Remote work opportunities
- Work-Life Balance
- Job Security
- Benefits (federal holidays and vacation, federal pension, etc.)

Understanding GS Levels and Pay

- **General Schedule (GS) pay system covers most USDA employees. GS includes 15 grade levels and 10 steps within each grade level.**
 - **Grade level** is established based on the job duties- level of difficulty, responsibility, and qualifications required.
 - PTP positions start at grade level 07 and progress to grade level 12 in a little over 3 years
 - **Step.** New GS employees are usually hired at step 1 of the applicable GS grade. Current federal employees who are not considered newly appointed may have pay set above step 1 based only on a previous federal civilian rate of pay.
- **Additional information:**
 - OPM General Schedule Overview: <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/pay-systems/general-schedule/>
 - GS Pay Tables (find your location, then look at GS-07, Step 1): <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/2023/general-schedule>
 - USAJOBS FAQ – How is pay set for employees new to government? <https://www.usajobs.gov/Help/faq/pay/setting/>

Eligibility – Hiring Authorities

PTP positions are open to:

- **Current USDA employees, veterans, military spouses, and people with disabilities eligible for Schedule A hiring authority**
(Announcement Number OCP-11717714-23-LA)
 - Additional information on special hiring authorities is available on [USAJOBS Help page](#). Please scroll down to the section titled “Explore Hiring Paths” for additional information on eligibility for special hiring authorities.
- **College Graduates who graduated within the last two years**
(Announcement Number OCP-11717715-23-LA)
 - College graduates who received a Bachelors or graduate degree within the previous two years from the closing date of the announcement (January 13, 2023).
 - A veteran within two years of release or discharge from uniformed service who was unable to apply within two years of receiving their baccalaureate or graduate degree due to a uniformed service obligation of at least four years.

Minimum Qualification – Grade 07 Contract Specialist

Education

OR

Experience

OR

Combination of
Education and
Experience

At least one full year of graduate level education in qualifying curriculum

OR

Bachelor's degree in qualifying curriculum plus superior academic achievement (SAA)

At least one year of specialized experience in contracting equivalent to the GS-05 level

Minimum Qualification - Education

Completed **1 full academic year of graduate level education in one or a combination of the following fields: accounting, business, finance, law, contracts, purchasing, economics, industrial management, marketing, quantitative methods, or organization and management.** (NOTE: One year of full-time graduate level academic study is defined as 18 semester hours, 27 quarter hours, or the equivalent in a college or university.)

OR

Completed a **bachelor's degree in a curriculum that is qualifying for the position to be filled such as accounting, business, finance, law, contracts, purchasing, economics, industrial management, marketing, quantitative methods, or organization and management and meet superior academic achievement (SAA).** Applicants can qualify for the SAA by at least one of the following three methods: (1) class standing- upper third of the graduating class based on completed courses in the college, university or major subdivision; (2) grade point average - 3.0 or higher out of a possible 4.0 ("B" or better) as recorded on their official transcripts, or as computed based on 4 years of education, or as computed based on courses completed during the final 2 years of the curriculum; OR 3.5 or higher out of a possible 4.0 ("B" or better) based on the average of the required courses completed in the major field or the required courses in the major field completed during the final 2 years of the curriculum; OR (3) election to membership in a national scholastic honor society (note: membership in a freshman honor society cannot be used to meet the requirements of this provision).

Minimum Qualification - Experience

Completed at least one year of specialized experience comparable to GS-05 which is directly related to the work of this position and which has equipped the applicant with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform successfully the duties of the position. For this position, specialized experience is **interpreting and applying basic contracting methods to assist in providing procurement services.**

Additionally, all applicants must meet the [basic requirements for GS-1102 Contract Specialists](#) established by the Office of Personnel Management

How to Apply

- ✓ If you are new to USAJOBS, follow the step-by-step instructions posted to the USAJOBS Help page: <https://www.usajobs.gov/Help/get-started/>
- ✓ Apply to the appropriate job opening (vacancy announcement):
 - [Current USDA employees, veterans, military spouses, and people with disabilities eligible for Schedule A hiring authority](#) (*Announcement Number OCP-11717714-23-LA*)
 - [College Graduates](#) who graduated within the last two years (*Announcement Number OCP-11717715-23-LA*)
- ✓ Be sure to submit your application between January 5-13, 2023!
- ✓ Reference the “Required Documents” listed in the vacancy announcement to ensure you provide a complete application

What We're Looking For

In addition to eligibility and meeting minimum qualifications, we are looking for:

- Why you are interested in working for USDA and/or the federal government
- Why you are interested in a career as a Contract Specialist
- How you have demonstrated experience in the key competencies of a Contract Specialist including problem solving, customer service, communication, decisiveness, flexibility, resilience, and accountability

If these are not included in your resume, you may want to submit a cover letter (one page). This is NOT REQUIRED but does help us better understand your application and level of interest.

Approximate Timing

Timing	Activity
Jan 5-13, 2023	Accepting applications on USAJOBS
Jan 16- Feb 3	Government review of applications
Feb 6-24	Interviews
Feb 27- March 3	Job Offers
March 2023	Background checks, paperwork
April 10, 2023	Planned start date for all PTP employees

All timeframes are approximate, and are dependent on the number of applications received, HR time to process applications, and other internal factors. Dates provided here are estimates for planning purposes only.

Additional Information



USDA OCP PTP website: <https://www.usda.gov/da/ocp/ptp>



PTP Job Openings (vacancy announcements)- apply between January 5-13, 2023

[Current USDA employees, veterans, military spouses, and people with disabilities eligible for Schedule A hiring authority](#)

[College Graduates](#) who graduated within the last two years



USDA PTP Continued Service Agreement:

<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-ocp-ptp-continued-service-agreement-v2.pdf>



QUESTIONS?

Please type your questions in the Teams Q&A section. Questions will be addressed in the order they are received.