

## CALL TO SERVE



# Federal Career Day Toolkit

FIRST EDITION  
JUNE 2007



PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

## INTRODUCTION

Career centers have the difficult and important job of connecting students with employers who are a good match for their interests and skills. Traditionally, career fairs have been one of the primary tools used to expose students to a broad range of job opportunities and help them establish personal contacts.

In recent years, the Internet has dramatically altered the job-search process, and these changes require career centers to rethink the way they operate and utilize job fairs to ensure that they are still relevant and fill a void in the recruiting landscape.

The Partnership for Public Service has conducted extensive research to identify the best way to structure a job fair that introduces students to the opportunities being offered by our nation's largest employer – the federal government.

The following toolkit reflects the lessons learned by this research and offers a step-by-step guide on how to plan a contemporary federal career fair.

This guide is written for professionals who have experience with the logistics of career fairs. If you do not have this experience, we advise partnering with your institution's career center to benefit from their expertise and networks.

We hope this toolkit will help you help your students find career opportunities in our federal government, which will be both professionally and personally rewarding.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A companion set of federal career day resources, developed by *Call to Serve* network schools, can be downloaded as a zip file at [www.ourpublicservice.org/calltoserve](http://www.ourpublicservice.org/calltoserve). The resources are divided into six folders, matching the six steps outlined in the toolkit.

An index of these resources can also be found on the last page of this document.

## BACKGROUND

The U.S. employer who offers the most diverse array of career opportunities also happens to be one of the employers about which college students know the least – the federal government.

The federal government employs 1.9 million people, with jobs in hundreds of different fields in thousands of different locations across the country and the globe. These also happen to be jobs that college students want. According to the Partnership for Public Service's *Back to School* report (May 2005), 42 percent of juniors and seniors are interested in working for the federal government, which is a higher percentage than were interested in working for non-profit, and only slightly less than the number reporting interest in working for a large private sector company.

Unfortunately, only 13 percent of college juniors and seniors actually know how to locate the information needed to pursue a federal career.

In 2006, The Partnership for Public Service teamed with the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to identify the most sustainable ways to promote government service on college campuses and place young people in great jobs they might otherwise not know about.

One component of the Partnership's work was trying to figure out ways to put a new spin on one of the old standbys of college recruiting, the career fair. In particular, the Partnership wanted to examine the feasibility and effectiveness of career fairs dedicated specifically to highlighting government agencies.

The Partnership and OPM coordinated Federal Career Days at Louisiana State University (October 2006) and Ohio State University (November 2006). The Partnership studied and documented the steps taken at OSU and LSU – from conception through implementation. It also gathered leading practices and resources from other universities that have hosted federal career fairs. The findings of this research are reflected in this toolkit, which should serve as a how-to guide for college career centers who want to host a federal job or internship fair.

Now is the time for career centers to do more to expose students to federal service. Not only do polling numbers suggest too many students are missing out on job opportunities that match their skills and interests, but retirement numbers tell us that an increasing number of federal jobs will be available in the coming years. The federal government is projected to lose more than 550,000 workers within the next five years – more than one-third of its permanent, full-time workforce. Our federal government is going to need an influx of new talent, and it only makes sense that one of the key pipelines for this talent should come from our colleges and universities. This toolkit is designed to help career service professionals open the spigot.

## THE TOOLKIT

This toolkit offers a step-by-step plan for planning an effective federal career fair. We have identified six basic steps for success, which serve as the organizing framework for the toolkit.

### SIX STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL FEDERAL CAREER FAIR

STEP 1: Making the Decision

STEP 2: Building Your Project Team

STEP 3: Planning and Making the Most of Your Career Fair

STEP 4: Planning Your Outreach Strategy

STEP 5: Measuring Your Success

STEP 6: Following Up

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#### STEP 1: Making the Decision

Before beginning to plan for a federal career fair, it is important that you assess your campus in order to appropriately set expectations and determine how to move forward. Because fairs can range in size and audience to meet your school's needs, rest assured that you have a lot of flexibility in how you structure and conduct this type of event. Here are some questions to ask before commencing the planning process.

##### *Why conduct a Federal Career Fair on your campus?*

Undoubtedly, this question will be asked by a naysayer along the way to hosting such an event. While you must decide this answer on your own, here are a few things to consider:

- **The Students' Interests**  
Career service centers are charged with helping students find jobs that match their skills and interests. The nation's largest employer has pending openings for students of every academic background. Exposing students to these federal opportunities is only common sense.
- **The University's Mission**  
Most universities have a public mission that includes service to your country, state or community. Promoting federal service to students is an easy and logical way to advance this mission.
- **Your School's Commitment**  
As a *Call to Serve* network school, each institution's President signed a commitment for action, stating, "*We pledge to educate our students about careers in government... [including] sponsoring campus events at which information about Federal service careers can be made available.*"

### ***What is the interest or knowledge level of your students in regard to government opportunities?***

Assessing your students' interest and knowledge will help you identify the additional activities or publicity needed to effectively plan for a federal career fair. These activities (see "Step 3: Planning and Making the Most of Your Career Fair") will help prepare students, faculty and staff for effective interactions with federal recruiters, which may differ from interactions with private sector recruiters and employers.

We encourage you to assess your students through either a formal survey or by informally talking to students. A formal survey allows you not only to assess knowledge and interest levels but provides you quantitative data to support the need for this event and others like it. Certain statistics from this survey can be used in recruiting agencies to campus and to help attune them to your students' interests. Informal interviews will also help you get a general sense of how much you will need to prepare the general student body for a federal fair.

Further, the results of these assessments can lead to setting up targeted workshops or information sessions for students prior to or during the federal career event.

### ***What is the knowledge and interest level of your faculty and staff in forging relationships with federal agencies?***

Faculty and staff members at your college or university can be some of your biggest allies for this type of event, especially in establishing and maintaining relationships with key agencies. There is a good chance that some of them already have established relationships with certain agencies. These relationships typically stem from a history of successful recruiting from a strong academic program, the faculty or staff member being a former employee of an agency, or a professor receiving a federal research grant. Existing relationships can be a catalyst for some agencies to visit your campus that might otherwise not visit.

Faculty and staff members can also be useful in your outreach strategy (see "Step 4: Planning Your Outreach Strategy") when promoting your federal career fair to students. Identifying multiple supporters for an event such as this will only help you in the long run.

### ***What federal relationships already exist?***

Don't overlook the relationships the Career Center may already have with federal recruiters. Use this event as an opportunity to strengthen your relationship with them. One way to achieve this is by involving key agency "friends" in planning the federal career fair. For example, federal recruiters may provide input on effective outreach strategies to their peers at other agencies.

Some universities have found success alumni offices to be useful partners. Alumni offices often track the employers of their alumni and may already have relationships with some of those individuals in federal service.

### ***What is the federal presence in your area?***

Knowing the federal presence in your geographic region is key to setting expectations for yourself and your students. A simple flip through the blue pages in your local phone book will help identify local federal offices. Assessing your current relationships with federal recruiters and your local Federal Executive Board or Federal Executive Association (see "Step 4: Planning Your Outreach") are also great places to start. Further, this will help set expectations when "Picking Your Model" which can range from five agencies meeting with a specific academic department to 120 agency recruiters recruiting across your entire campus.

### ***Can you move forward?***

Remember that a federal career fair can take many different forms. If you feel confident in your ability to host a successful event on your campus after this assessment, move forward and identify a “champion.”

If you conclude that a federal career fair is not a good idea for your campus, Step 3 of this toolkit presents a number of approaches to help you increase the federal knowledge and interest levels, while building relationships with federal recruiters.

### **Identify a Champion**

Assuming that the assessment results are promising, a useful next step is to identify a respected member of the university community to champion the federal career fair. A “champion” can provide important institutional support for the undertaking, making it easier for those planning and executing the event to get access to the resources needed to make the career fair a success. Note that your champion may or may not be directly involved with the planning and implementation of the event.

Examples of good champions are university chancellors, presidents, provosts, deans and career services directors.

### **Picking your Model**

Once you have assessed interest on your campus and the availability of agencies in your area, you will need to decide the structure of the event that will best suit your university. Fairs can range from five to 120 agencies and can be targeted to a specific academic area or the entire student body. There are three main questions that you should consider in determining the model that is best for your school:

- What Campuses?
- What Employers?
- What Students?

<b>What Campuses?</b>
<b>A single institution</b> can choose to hold a career fair strictly for their students. Outside of the logistical benefits to this model, the organizers are able to schedule more targeted and customized relationship building events for faculty and students.
<b>OR</b>
<b>A consortium of area colleges and universities</b> may choose to host a career fair together. Although it is more complicated logistically to host a multi-university/college career fair, agencies may find it more attractive to attend an event that provides access to students from multiple campuses.

*Questions to help guide this discussion:*

- What local universities/colleges could be potential partners?
- Do we (or does a partnering university) have the facilities to accommodate students from all participating universities?
- Do we have the resources to support this type of event alone?
- Can we draw recruiters from the desired number of agencies to our campus by ourselves?

### What Employers?

Some universities have hosted **public service career fairs** that include nonprofits, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), federal agencies, and local and state government. Others host government career fairs. Whatever the decision, this can be a great way to reach students who want to work in the public sector but are unaware of the specific area in which they want to serve. Students don't always associate the federal government with "public service" so a combined approach can be another way to break down some misconceptions.

OR

Hosting a **federal career fair** has proven to be a great way to heighten awareness of federal opportunities within a university community since the focus is only on federal agency recruiters. Narrowing the focus of a fair runs the risk of fewer students in attendance but allows for more targeted marketing and preparation for students and faculty. When selecting the title of this event, be sure to select something that resonates and sets the appropriate expectations for students. (e.g., "Public Service Fair," "Federal Career Fair," "Government Career Fair")

*Questions to help guide this discussion:*

- What public sector organizations would we want to attend?
- Which model would attract more interest by students and recruiters?
- What message resonates with students on our campus that would set appropriate expectations for the fair?

### What Students?

Conducting a fair for **all majors** at your university can certainly attract more students but also sets the expectations that there will be a large number of recruiters in attendance. Universities have found this type of fair helpful in bringing together parts of a campus that may not typically interact. This also allows an agency to recruit for positions in different areas of their organization at once but presents a challenge for the organizer to make sure there are opportunities for all majors available at the fair.

OR

Career fairs can also be **targeted** for certain populations or disciplines/majors on your campus. For example, specific disciplines could be engineering, liberal arts, biological sciences or foreign languages. A population focus could be on ethnic and minority groups or disabled students. Education levels (graduate students, undergraduates seeking internships, or graduating seniors) could be another approach. The targeted model allows for specific outreach strategies and networking opportunities and works well when trying to build faculty into the event. While a targeted fair is usually smaller, it can be just as effective as the larger, all-purpose fair.

*Questions to help guide this discussion:*

- What academic programs at the host school(s) would attract a number of agencies? (i.e., what categories of students are the agencies seeking to hire?)
- Can we get enough of the "right" recruiters in order to offer something to the entire campus?
- Is there a suitable space available to conduct this event?

## **Cost**

University representatives have reported costs ranging from \$850-\$25,000 to host a federal career fair, depending on the scope and purpose of the project. The majority of their costs went toward facility and food expenses.

To defray a portion of the costs, host schools typically charge an agency \$50-\$150 to participate in the fair. This price includes parking, booth space and a small snack and beverage. Universities have reported that in the first few years, they had to subsidize the fair more heavily. Once it is established and there are repeat participants, more than 50 percent of the total cost is covered by the participating agencies.

Some universities also choose to waive the fees when an agency requests it. For them, the priority has been having a good cross-section of potential employers to interact with students.

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## **STEP 2: Building Your Project Team**

Depending upon the federal career fair model you choose, a variety of people will need to be involved in the planning and implementation of this event to ensure success. In addition to key individuals from the career services office, other important parties to involve in planning the fair include:

- Academic Affairs/Faculty Senate
- Department Chairs
- Student Representatives
- Facility Services
- Office of Public Affairs or Communications
- Government/Legislative Affairs Officer
- Schools of Public Administration and/or Public Policy
- An agency representative with whom you already have a relationship

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### **STEP 3: Planning and Making the Most of the Event**

The federal career fair model described in this toolkit is one that offers a variety of options so a university can tailor the event to meet its needs, its students' interests, and the resources it can commit to the event. Once you have decided to host a career fair, the first decision is to determine when to hold the event. Next is the all-important step of deciding what supplemental events and activities to schedule in support of the basic career fair component. In this step, there is room for plenty of creativity and innovation, but there is also a need for prudence to avoid creating an event too complex or large for your purposes.

#### **When to Hold Your Career Fair**

Career fairs typically take place either in mid-fall or late winter/early spring. The main difference in timing is the target audience. Since many federal internship and job deadlines occur early in the academic year, some schools hold their fairs in the fall, which would appeal to those looking for the spring or summer job opportunities. Hosting a fair in the late winter or early spring will appeal to those looking for summer internships and to those looking ahead to the following school year.

The time of day in which the event is held is also an important factor to consider. Commuter campuses or campuses with a high number of non-traditional or working students may consider holding their fair during later hours in the day.

#### **How to Structure Your Federal Career Fair**

The theme to keep in mind as you begin mapping out your event is “relationship building.” Everything you plan should lend itself to this end goal. Make sure to provide agencies the opportunity to do much more than set up a booth. Expect that you will be the “middle man” in the planning for many of these events. Recruiters don't know your campuses as well as you do.

The core event for a federal career fair is the fair itself. Traditionally, agencies set up booths and display materials about their mission and job opportunities, and students come to these booths to get information. Students often offer resumes to agency recruiters who are staffing the booths, and sometimes agencies conduct informational interviews with interested students.

Variations on the career fair itself include:

- Workshops on specific topics (such as how to complete an application for a federal job) during the time the career fair is being conducted.
- Agency reviews of resumes of students before the career fair, using this as a means of identifying students they will interview while on campus.
- Agency presentations or information sessions to interested students to provide more in-depth information about job opportunities and what the agency is seeking. This often occurs days leading up to or following the fair.

#### **Preparing Your Students to Make the Most of a Federal Career Fair**

It can be helpful to familiarize faculty and students about federal employment before the career fair takes place. This preparation can be enhanced by the activities occurring during the career fair itself.

## Ideas for Preparing Students

Host a workshop for students on “**Finding and Applying for Federal Opportunities**” prior to the event to educate students on the process, programs and appropriate questions to ask.

- Familiarize students with terms like Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP), Student Career Employment Program (SCEP) or Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP) to enrich their conversation with an agency representative.

Encourage recruiters to **come on campus a few days before the fair** to create a presence on campus.

- **Integrate recruiters into classes** for special lectures or a brief informational discussion about their agency.
- Encourage recruiters to conduct **informational sessions** about their agency the night before a fair. These are best organized by major discipline where selected agencies are invited to present together on a panel.
- Establish opportunities for recruiters to meet key faculty in departments from which they wish to recruit.
- Allow recruiters access to your online resume bank so they can **pre-screen candidates and set up selected interviews** while on campus.

**Conduct federal or public sector career panels** involving alumni or students who have done federal internships or are current federal employees. This type of event can also stand alone throughout a semester and serve to promote an upcoming career fair.

Some universities have hosted pre-event sessions addressing specific “Government Careers for \_\_\_\_\_ Majors” which included alumni and local representatives from federal agencies.

When conducting additional sessions, be careful not to force students to decide between going to the fair and going to a session as described above

## Using Your Career Fair to Build Lasting Relationships

Relationship building should be an objective of holding a career fair at your university. By doing this, you will provide agencies the opportunity to do much more than set up a booth. Expect to be the facilitator in planning many of these events, helping recruiters to find the exact professor or student group with which they should meet. To some extent, you will be a “matchmaker.”

Relationship building can occur in many ways. The toolkit’s additional resources present a number of the ideas in the federal career fair schedule from one university, but there are many other options. Here are some ideas for events that can be set up around the core career fair to make an agency’s on-campus time more productive and to work toward deeper agency-university relationships:

- Host a **networking reception or breakfast** the day of the career fair for **recruiters to meet the career services staff**, faculty and key leaders of the university. Target faculty members who teach in areas that you know are being recruited by these agencies. Make sure to inform them of the reason they are being invited – to build deeper agency/university relationships. As the organizer, make sure to connect people at these events so discussions can lead to lasting relationships. After the event, provide everyone’s contact information to all attendees.
- Arrange **visits** for students and faculty to **local federal offices**. Providing the opportunity to see an agency first hand, meet the people who work there and see some of the work they do can be more powerful than an informational session.

## Some Tips for Success

- Encourage **deans and faculty** members to **attend the career fair** to meet and exchange business cards with recruiters.
- Assist and encourage agencies to **bring along university alumni** who now work at the agency. Again, it is important that the students see someone they can relate to at an agency's table in order to feel comfortable.
- Provide the career fair schedule to all involved well in advance so they can plan accordingly.
- Encourage agencies to conduct **information sessions** in the same building that a specific academic department or school is located. This brings the agency directly to the students.
- Develop a **comprehensive information packet** outlining the mission of the agencies in attendance, the types of job and internship opportunities they have available, and the types of students they are seeking.
- Provide students a **glossary of federal agency acronyms** (e.g., USDA: United States Department of Agriculture, CBP: US Customs and Border Patrol).
- **Be strategic in how you place the agencies.** Place agencies according to the kinds of positions they are recruiting (e.g., group TSA, CBP, FEMA, etc. together as components of the Department of Homeland Security) or group them by major or discipline from which they are recruiting. (e.g., multiple agencies seeking engineering students). To avoid congestion in your venue, do not put popular agencies next to each other.
- Provide name tags that **list the recruiter's name and full agency name** (not just acronym), as well as name tags for students showing their name **and major**.
- As the organizer, **gather all contact information** for every recruiter who comes on campus. Keep track of any faculty or student organization with whom they met and encourage follow-up. (See "Step 6: Following Up")
- Provide agencies a list of the **direct contacts or liaisons** for each major or area at the university for direct follow-up. They don't always have the time or institutional knowledge to identify the right person to help build the ongoing relationship.

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## STEP 4: Planning Your Outreach Strategy

Like any event you host, the effectiveness of the outreach and publicity will determine the overall success of the event – from agency recruiter participation to student attendance. It is important that you conduct this outreach in a timely manner and that it be carefully targeted to the audience you are trying to reach. When conducting outreach for a federal career fair, it is important to target three key audiences: agencies, faculty and students. This section will provide general guidance as well as sample outreach and publicity materials from selected universities.

### Agencies

#### *With whom should you to communicate?*

- Start with the agencies where you have a **pre-existing relationship**. They may also help you with further outreach and schedule development (see “Step 2: Building Your Project Team”). The Career Services Center on your campus can provide names of agency contacts with whom they’ve worked in the past.
- The Director of your local **Federal Executive Board (FEB) or Federal Executive Association (FEA)** can greatly assist you with your outreach. These groups are organized by the Office of Personnel Management in major cities across the country. A listing with their contact information can be found at [www.opm.feb.gov](http://www.opm.feb.gov).
  - FEBs and FEAs provide a structure for regional federal offices to collaborate and share information to others in their geographical region.
  - In some special cases, FEB or FEA leaders can be some of your greatest allies in agency outreach.
  - Should your local FEB or FEA contact not be responsive, don’t give up. You may find “champions” in the ranks of the HR committee chairs within the FEB or FEA who will gladly assist with the career fair. When reaching out to any agency, it is best to ask for the Director of Recruitment and Hiring.
- As mentioned in Step 1, browsing the blue pages of your local phone book can give you a snapshot of federal agencies in your area. A call to speak with the **Hiring and Recruitment Director** can put you on the right path.
- Send the specifics about the fair to the **Office of Personnel Management** in Washington, D.C., which may be able to help disseminate this information.

#### *What should you communicate?*

- The **basic information** (e.g., date, time, location)
- The **demographics of your campus** and types of students with which they could potentially interact during the fair. Be sure to include the academic majors offered and breakdown of race, class size, average test scores, etc.
  - Use this as an opportunity to further sell the high points of your university (e.g., highly ranked academic programs, well-known professors, accomplishments of certain students)
- Your **expectations** and goals for the event. Take this opportunity to again express the value of attendance at events other than the fair, the types of recruiters they should bring and your goals for maintaining relationships following the fair.
- With the initial outreach, consider providing a **registration form** (or a link to the online version) that will allow you to gather data that will help with your on-campus outreach.

### ***When should you communicate?***

As soon as possible! Like you, agency recruiters have an allotted recruitment/travel budget that is set at the beginning of their fiscal year. Getting your event on their calendar early increases the possibility that they can come to your campus.

If your career fair is to be held during a time of federal budget uncertainty (such as when agencies are operating at last year's budget levels under a "continuing resolution"), it is particularly important to provide agencies ways to be involved in a variety of activities to maintain a presence on campus until they can actively hire again.

### ***How should you communicate?***

- Typically, campuses issue invitations via email or regular mail (U.S. Postal Service).
- Conducting follow-up calls to agency contacts is essential. Having your university's demographic and academic information on hand while making these calls has been very helpful and enables you to answer questions and further "market" your career fair.

### **Faculty/University Staff**

The faculty and staff of a university can be great promoters for this type of event. The Partnership for Public Service's *Back to Schools Report* (2005) noted that 96 percent of professors reported providing career advice while 62 percent of students report getting professional advice from their academic professors and advisors. Universities that have involved their faculty in networking opportunities and pre-event sessions have seen an increase in student participation at federal career fairs, with students reporting that they heard about the fair from a professor.

- Receiving support from your **Academic Affairs Office or Provost** could be a great place to start. A simple letter from this office can often prompt participation from administrators and faculty who might otherwise not be involved.
- The **career center or equivalent office** should send a letter to the faculty informing them of the upcoming fair. Be sure to include the event's purpose, expectations, date, time and location, and strongly encourage their participation in relationship building. Do not forget to include a calendar of events to accompany this letter.
- With enough time, you can even urge professors to place the event date on their **syllabus** at the beginning of the semester. This serves a great reminder for both the students and the faculty and is a low effort way to be supportive of the event.
- Some campuses have been able to include an article on the federal career day in the university's **faculty newsletter**.

Regardless of your initial outreach, follow up with emails, phone calls or letters to all participating faculty. Encourage faculty to not only promote the event in their classroom, but to be proactive in making their own contacts by taking a recruiter to lunch or inviting them to speak to a class. Many times these types of classroom presentations can open a student's eyes to opportunities they had never previously considered.

### **Students**

Outreach to students for a federal career fair can sometimes be very different from publicity for a general career fair. Depending on your campus, the title of your event will influence how students will respond to it. Terms like "Public Service Career Fair," "Government Career Fair" or

“Federal Career Fair” have been used on many campuses. It is just a matter of knowing what resonates best with the students on your campus.

Publicity can take many forms on campus. Here are some ideas:

- **Event flyers**
- **Signs**  
These can be general or more academically focused. It amazes both university staff and students when they see the scope of majors that certain agencies look to employ (this information should be gathered through an agency registration form). Providing targeted outreach will often encourage students to learn more about opportunities they previously would not have considered.
- Letters in the **campus newspaper**
- **Email messages** to inform students about the event. Similar to the signs, these can be targeted by certain academic disciplines.
- Advertisements on popular **student Web sites** (e.g., [www.thefacebook.com](http://www.thefacebook.com)) as well as the university’s career services Web site.
- Partnering with a **student organization** to host a panel or informational session. This will not only ensure student attendance but will encourage relationship building between an agency and a student organization.
- **Invite student leaders** to receptions and other networking opportunities with federal recruiters. This can help develop a strong grass roots campaign to your student outreach.
- Since students often report that they don’t know how to find and/or apply for federal jobs, it is important to continue to educate students about the federal hiring process. Once students feel knowledgeable about the federal public sector, they are much more likely to pursue a job or internship. **Informational sessions and workshops** (see “Step 3: Building Your Career Fair”) with intriguing names can accomplish this goal.

## **Alumni**

Another ally in this undertaking can be your alumni association. Some universities have worked with their alumni office to locate current and former federal employees. These alumni can be used at career fairs, in classroom presentations, on panels, etc. Once an agency has confirmed their participation in the fair, it can be useful to encourage them to bring along any alumni employed at the agency.

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## **STEP 5: Measuring Your Success**

Measurement and documentation of results are important parts of the process. Measurement can be both process-oriented and results-oriented, using different data sources.

Process-oriented evaluations can include tallying attendance numbers and students' evaluations of the career fair. These can be useful in getting support both from university and federal agencies for future events and can help you improve your event in the future. The toolkit's additional resources shows a sample evaluation form for a federal career fair.

Results-oriented evaluations help ascertain the long-term effect of a federal career fair. Specifically, the university wants to collect data on the number of students who get federal jobs or internships. This data can be hard to collect. Strong relationships with recruiters can help you get access to information, such as the number of students who applied and were hired from a certain agency. Over time, data allows comparisons to be made to previous years. Some universities also include questions on graduation surveys that inquire about government knowledge and interest in future employment opportunities.

Important information also comes from surveying recruiters and agency representatives. Because the federal sector uses recruitment and hiring strategies that differ from the private sector, it can be very helpful to carefully consider the comments, suggestions and concerns of federal recruiters.

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## **STEP 6: Following Up: Continue to Build Lasting Relationships**

The booths are broken down, the students have gone back to class, and you are ready to go home. But there is one more critical step that must take place if you hope to maximize the impact of a federal career fair – you need to follow up with federal recruiters.

- While obvious, a routine e-mail to all federal agency recruiters who attended to thank them for their participation provides the opportunity to inform them of upcoming events and to offer to help them network with faculty, staff and students. This is also another way to gather feedback from the federal career fair.
- Provide the contact information for agency representatives to faculty, staff and students who participated in the career fair, and strongly encourage them to conduct their own follow-up.
- Provide relevant major-specific information to deans, advisors, faculty or student groups about known agency programs, internships or jobs that you might have learned about during the fair.
- Follow up with agencies throughout the year to see if any students have applied to or found a job or internship within an agency.
- Invite agency representatives to sit on departmental or academic boards. This participation allows faculty to shape their curriculum to best prepare students for careers in public service.

## CONCLUSION

There you have it: how to plan a federal career fair in just six steps. Hopefully this strategy will prove successful on your campus and you will be able to host a fair that is rewarding for students, faculty and federal agencies. If so, you can add a step seven – make plans to do another fair next year.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Contacts

#### Partnership for Public Service Contacts:

Brad Golson

[bgolson@ourpublicservice.org](mailto:bgolson@ourpublicservice.org)

#### Office of Personnel Management Contacts:

Dave Herman

[David.herman@opm.gov](mailto:David.herman@opm.gov)

### Resources

To help you get started planning and preparing for your federal career fair, we have compiled a set of resources that is available for download at [www.ourpublicservice.org/calltoserve](http://www.ourpublicservice.org/calltoserve).

#### STEP 1

- Sample assessment survey
- Sample budget and expenses

#### STEP 2

No applicable resources

#### STEP 3

- Discipline specific session description
- Sample agency acronyms
- Sample event schedule
- Sample student fair packet
- The government of the United States

#### STEP 4

- General faculty letter
- Sample academic specific sign
- Sample communication budget
- Sample communications plan
- Sample email to faculty
- Sample event sign
- Sample flyers and signs
- Sample invitation and registration form
- Sample letter to agencies
- Sample press release
- Sample student profile guide for recruiters

#### STEP 5

- Sample student evaluations

#### STEP 6

- Sample agency evaluation