



USAID New Entry Professional Program

The NEW ENTRY PROFESSIONAL (NEP) PROGRAM is the Agency's program for bringing well qualified applicants into the Agency's Foreign Service. USAID's Foreign Service provides successful applicants with a career-long system of rotational assignments in Washington D.C. and overseas. Promotion is based upon merit with selections being made for promotion at various established points in an employee's career. Unlike the competitive U.S. Civil Service and most private industry, pay is set based upon a person's grade level regardless of duty assignments. Like the U.S. Department of State and other agencies employing Foreign Service personnel, successful applicants are offered a clear path for planning their career from the intake level through the most senior executive positions.

APPLICATIONS are accepted only for the specific vacancy(s) when announced and posted.

I. **SELECTION**

Selection for the NEP program is based upon a highly competitive screening process. Consequently, applicants meeting the basic requirements may not go through the entire screening/interview/selection process. Candidates are evaluated on the basis of academic credentials, related overseas and/or domestic development professional experience, and other relevant factors.

Applications are initially screened for basic eligibility, such as: citizenship, education, and experience which demonstrates the applicant's ability to accomplish professional development work (e.g. in developing countries) for a U.S. Government agency.

After the initial screening for General Requirements, eligible applicants are rated by a technical panel against the following job related knowledge, skills and abilities: technical knowledge, management and team building skills, oral communication and representational skills and written communication skills.

Following the second screening, the most competitive applicants for each occupational category are invited to come to Washington, D.C. at their own expense for an interview. Interviews are scheduled as specified in each vacancy announcement when posted. Candidates are interviewed by a technical panel on their related knowledge, skills and abilities. The panel is composed of the appropriate technical and career development officers representing the various occupational categories and a representative from the office of Equal Opportunity Programs (EOP).

Selected candidates must successfully obtain security and health clearances prior to entering on duty.

II. **GENERAL REQUIREMENTS**

- U.S. Citizenship: Candidates must be U.S. citizens at the time of application.

- Worldwide Availability: Foreign Service Officers will spend the majority of their careers overseas and must be willing to accept assignments at any USAID location, almost all of which are in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean region, Asia and the Near East, or Eastern Europe and the former Soviet States.

- The upper age limit for hiring into the Foreign Service is 59, since an applicant hired beyond that age would not accumulate enough years of service to be vested into the retirement system by the time he/she reaches the mandatory retirement age of 65.

At the FS-4 level: Applicants must demonstrate a combination of experience, education and training equivalent to seven years of professional experience directly related to the specific position to be filled, or a Bachelor's degree in a relevant major plus 3 years of relevant experience, or a Master's degree in a relevant major plus one year of experience, or, a Ph.D. in a relevant major, or an equivalent combination of such education and experience.

At the FS-5 level: One year less experience than required at the FS-4 level.

III. **SPECIALIZED REQUIREMENTS**

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit a supplemental statement with their application addressing the specific knowledge, skills and abilities listed in the announcement.

IV. FINAL SELECTION CRITERIA

- Foreign Language Requirements: Language skills may be used as a final selection criterion among the best qualified candidates. If selected candidates do not have a foreign language proficiency, they will receive language training before going overseas.
- Computer Skills: Computer skills may also be used as a final selection criterion among the best qualified candidates.
- Veteran's Preference applies. Qualified veterans will be considered consistent with Office of Personnel Management guidelines.

V. NEW ENTRANT PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

Training begins in Washington and can last up to eighteen months. The training starts with a three day indoctrination in which all in-processing formalities are dealt with. A week and a half of orientation follows, in which the New Entrants are introduced to the USAID culture, organization and methods of doing business (program design, implementation, evaluation and management). During the third week of group training, Individual Training Plans (ITPs) are developed based upon the New Entrant's education, training, experience and the needs of the agency. The ITPs may run up to eighteen months and may include Washington rotational assignments, overseas TDYs, formal classroom training and language training if required.

ITPs are designed to prepare the New Entrant for his/her initial overseas assignment. To ensure an appropriate first overseas assignment, placement will be made to an existing position in a mission via direct assignment.

Where possible New Entrants will be assigned to positions where they can dual encumber the position with their predecessor for approximately six months.

VI. PROFESSIONAL TARGET DISCIPLINES

USAID recruits officers in selective priority skill areas such as: Democracy and Governance, Environment/Natural Resources/Energy, Financial Management, Population/Health/Nutrition, Program/Project Development, Contract Management, Administrative Management, Lawyers, Education, Private Enterprise, Agriculture/Rural Development, Food for Peace, and Economists. Based upon program needs, size of programs and attrition, it might be necessary to recruit on an as needed basis for other skill areas. Brief descriptions and requirements of the target positions are as follows:

A. **Democracy and Governance Officers** in USAID are responsible for development, oversight, management (staff, financial, and technical resources), and evaluation of Mission democracy and governance programs that may include any or all of the following areas: Rule of Law and human rights programs, civil society, media and labor programs to promote democratic pluralism, improved governance, competitive political processes and elections, and strategic planning for political development. Democracy and Governance Officers apply both a technical knowledge of their program area and a variety of management and program evaluation expertise in order to ensure that projects meet the needs of USAID's partners and customers in a cost-effective manner.

B. **Environment Officers** in USAID are responsible for development oversight, management, and evaluation of programs in the following areas: bio-diversity conservation, forestry, wildlife management, water and coastal resources management, environmental education, environmental policy, environmentally sustainable agriculture, community based natural resources management, urban and industrial pollution reduction, urban planning and management (including such areas as housing, water and sanitation), urban and housing finance, energy efficiency and conservation, renewable energy applications, clean energy technologies, energy sector planning and global climate change. Environment Officers apply both a technical knowledge of their program area and a variety of management and program evaluation knowledge in order to ensure that projects meet the needs of USAID's partners and customers in a cost-effective manner.

C. **Financial Management Officers** direct the accounting and payment operations in USAID missions worldwide. In addition, they provide significant levels of advisory services to all levels of the mission and host country governments. This includes administrative, operational and program matters concerning financial, budgetary and resource management and implementation issues.

D. **Population/Health/Nutrition Officers** in USAID are responsible for development, oversight, management (staff, financial, and technical resources), and evaluation of PHN programs that may include any or all of the following areas: primary health care (including immunizations, acute respiratory infections, diarrheal diseases),

maternal/child health (including safe motherhood), population/family planning (reproductive health), HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, infectious diseases (including malaria, TB, antimicrobial resistance, surveillance), nutrition/micronutrients, water and sanitation, environmental health, social marketing, demography, population, health or nutrition policy, operations research in population, health or nutrition, biomedical/clinical research (including vaccines, antimicrobial resistance, malaria, TB, neonatal, contraceptive technology), epidemiology, logistics management, national pharmaceutical management and health economics. Population/Health/Nutrition Officers apply both a technical knowledge of their program area and a variety of management and program evaluation expertise in order to ensure that projects meet the needs of USAID's partners and customers in a cost-effective manner.

E. **Program/Project Development Officers** in USAID are responsible for strategy development, policy formulation, performance reporting, programming/budgeting of resources, coordinating with other donor assistance and USG agencies, project management, and, public outreach. They are looked upon to ensure that the Mission's operational procedures are designed to elicit teamwork, emphasize shared values, make known programming priorities, and reward innovation. Program/Project development officers must be able to apply leadership and management skills in order to ensure that program activities are designed and implemented to achieve stated objectives, within resource constraints and in a timely manner.

F. **Contracting Officers** in USAID plan, negotiate, award and administer contracts, grants and other agreements with individuals, firms and institutions to carry out USAID financed projects. Duties include providing technical guidance and assistance to USAID's overseas and Washington staffs, and host country officials in the negotiation and awarding of contracts, grants and cooperative agreements.

G. **Executive Officers** oversee a wide range of administrative and logistical support functions including personnel management, contracting, procurement, property management, motor pool management, travel management, employee/family housing and maintenance management. In addition to having direct responsibility for providing the daily support of the agency's field mission, duties include planning for future personnel and procurement requirements at the assigned duty station.

H. **Lawyers** provide legal counsel to planners and administrators of USAID's overseas programs, such as interpretation and counsel on application of U.S. and cooperative country laws and regulations, Agency directives and delegations of authority, bilateral agreements, loan and grant agreements, contracts and other agreements pertaining to country or regional programs. They advise on reconciliation of problems resulting from differences between U.S. and cooperating country laws. They advise mission or regional personnel on the drafting and promotion of legislation and regulations to be proposed for enactment or adoption by the cooperating country government Ministry of Justice and advise regional staff on U.S. support for multicountry programs, treaties and agreements.

I. **Education Development Officers** analyze, advise, and assist with the development of host country education human resources and manpower planning systems. Strategies are designed to improve existing education programs as well as to promote organizational competencies and skills acquisition related to both individual and institutional development. Duties include participation in Agency policy formulation, sector analysis, program and project design, program monitoring, and evaluation of activities in education and human resources.

J. **Private Enterprise Officers** advise and assist host country leaders from both the public and private sectors in furthering the emergence of a market economy in the host country. They assist in the development of the USAID mission's economic growth strategy and design, manage and evaluate USAID programs that encompass a broad range of activities to support the growth of market economies, including support for: economic policy reform, financial sector reform, the design and implementation of microfinance programs, trade liberalization; effective privatization, small business development, the expansion of indigenous private sector activities and institutions, and the involvement of the U.S. private sector in the development process.

K. **Agriculture/Rural Development Officers** advise senior USAID and host government officials on agriculture and rural development projects. They identify problems and propose solutions, participate in project design and development, and manage and evaluate programs. Duties include coordinating the flow of resources for projects, analyzing the effects of proposed policies, legislation, and programs and advising on interdisciplinary rural development programs.

L. **Food for Peace Officers** assist in the planning, analysis, negotiation and implementation of USAID food and emergency projects/programs. They are responsible for programming and monitoring all uses of USAID supplied food. They provide assistance to host government authorities and to Private Voluntary Organizations (PVOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) on technical and financial aspects of project/program design, accountability, monitoring and reporting. Duties include ensuring that proposed projects/programs meet USAID criteria and are properly documented.

M. **Program Economists** serve as advisors to missions on all economic factors related to all mission programs and as advisors to the cooperating government on all aspects of economic development analysis and planning. They conduct analyses of both the macroeconomic conditions of host countries and the microeconomic feasibility of individual projects. The main purpose of these studies and analyses is to provide a basis for sound decisions for U.S. assistance within the framework of U.S. objective and cooperating country needs and capabilities and to help determine the economic feasibility and justification of specific projects within the overall country, mission or regional development strategy.

V. **APPOINTMENTS, PROMOTIONS, AND TENURE**

Depending upon academic qualifications and relevant professional work experience, New Entrants are appointed as career-candidates at the Foreign Service (FS) level 5 or 4 (roughly equivalent to GS-11 or GS-12 in the U.S. Federal Competitive Civil Service). The Foreign Service Schedule comprises nine classes, FS-9 through FS-1, (with FS-1 being the highest), and on to the Senior Foreign Service (comparable to the Senior Executive Service).

New Entrants at both levels are evaluated yearly by their supervisor. These evaluations are then reviewed by Selection Boards which rank all Foreign Service Officers by class and functional group for promotion based upon relative performance standing.

By law, USAID must tenure or terminate career-candidate employees within five years of employment. Tenure requirements include a minimum of 3 years service with USAID, two of which must be overseas, tested language proficiency, medical clearances for worldwide service, and demonstrated performance at a level sufficient to demonstrate to the Tenure Board that the candidate possesses the potential to perform successfully as a career member of the Foreign Service.

VI. **MOBILITY**

All Foreign Service Officers must be available for worldwide assignment and are expected to spend a substantial portion of their careers in developing countries. Specific assignments are identified according to the needs of the Agency. They normally serve two tours of two years each at one post, interrupted by Rest and Recuperation (R&R) and Home Leave (**HL**). Foreign Service Officers are required to serve one or more rotation tours (usually three years) in Washington, D.C. during the course of their careers. Although they are assigned, and are required to serve wherever their talents are most needed, every possible consideration is given to their personal preferences and career development needs.

An applicant whose spouse may also be employed as a Foreign Service Officer by USAID or one of the Foreign Affairs agencies, should be aware that there may be instances during their careers when the Agency will not be able to assign both employees to the same post. Under such circumstances, the officer may elect to accept tours in separate posts or one spouse may choose to accompany the other and request leave without pay (LWOP) for the length of the tour.

VII. SALARIES AND ALLOWANCES

Starting salaries for New Entrants are based upon the FS grade level at which the applicant is appointed. Foreign Service pay scales are set by Congress and are reviewed annually for cost-of-living adjustments.

Upon selection as a participant in the NEP program, New Entrants who do not reside in the Washington metropolitan area are reimbursed for their own and their dependents' assignment travel to Washington, D.C. and shipment for household effects.

At overseas posts, New Entrants receive non-taxable government housing, as well as a non-taxable cost-of-living allowance where the cost of living is higher than in Washington, D.C. They may also receive a "school-away-from-post" allowance for the education of their dependent children. A taxable differential of 5-20% of basic salary may be paid for service at designated overseas hardship posts with difficult living conditions.

VIII. OTHER BENEFITS

Other benefits include paid annual leave, home leave, and sick leave; contributory government life and group health insurance coverage selected by the New Entrant; medical care and hospitalization overseas; transportation to and from post; shipment of authorized weights of household goods, and, where permitted, shipment of a motor vehicle.

IX. RETIREMENT AND ANNUITIES

New Entrants employed with USAID are under the Foreign Service Pension System (FSPS). Under the FSPS, they may retire voluntarily at age 50 with 20 years of service. Such service includes all creditable government and military service. Retirement is mandatory at age 65.

New Entrants enrolled in the FSPS contribute to both the Foreign Service Retirement System and Social Security. This is a three-tiered system with employees being allowed to contribute to (1) a thrift savings plan, (2) a defined annuity plan, and (3) social security. The annuity is based upon 1.7% times the first 20 years in the foreign service times the "high three average" base salary. The additional years after 20 are multiplied by 1.0% times the high three base salary. The maximum period of creditable service is 35 years.

X. HOW TO APPLY WHEN SPECIFIC VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS ARE POSTED

Each announcement should be reviewed since the requirements may differ from one to the other.

To view vacancy announcements, the web page address is: <http://www.usaid.gov/about/employment/nepanno2.htm>

XI. FOR MORE