

THE SEISMOGRAM

News and info to help our student and early-career scientists advance their careers

Seismological Society of America:
Advancing Earthquake Science Worldwide

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Finding a Job with the Federal Government: Focus on the USGS

You asked for help navigating the path to employment with federal agencies, and we're on the case. In this issue, a few of our friends at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the Department of Interior's leading science agency, share advice for making yourself a marketable candidate at their workplace.



Make sure your college courses are in line with your career goals.

The requirements for professional scientific positions in the federal workforce include specific education and coursework. Students can review these qualifications at <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/classification-qualifications/general-schedule-qualification-standards/#url=List-by-Occupational-Series>

Ask professionals how you can tailor your studies to give you a competitive edge in your field. Keith Knudsen, deputy director of the Earthquake Science Center at the USGS at Menlo Park, encourages geology students to be “well versed in geographic information systems as well as probability and statistics.”

Understand the application process.

Create a profile with [usajobs.com](https://www.usajobs.com), the Federal Government's official employment site, to receive automatic notification of new positions that meet your requirements. Additionally, check for job announcements regularly, and apply immediately as many announcements close within a few days of posting.

Read job postings carefully and double-check your applications to make sure you have followed all guidelines and instructions. If any requested information is omitted, you may be removed from the pool of candidates.

When applying for Federal jobs, understand that your submission will be reviewed by an HR professional before it's passed to the hiring manager, so include as much detail about past work experience and education as possible. “There's no need to limit a Federal resume to a certain number of pages,” says Julie Wozniak, the deputy associate director for Human Capital at USGS.

Be patient but persistent. “It can seem like it is taking forever for the Federal hiring practice to play out, but don't be afraid to contact the person identified to find out the status of the hiring process,” says Knudsen.

Familiarize yourself with the current scientific needs and goals of the organization.

“When you interview for a position, discuss how you will fit in with the current USGS research program specifically, and how your work or plans will augment what is currently ongoing,” says Annemarie Baltay, research geophysicist at the USGS Earthquake Science Center at Menlo Park. “Perhaps differently from academia, you must demonstrate how you fit into the USGS’s overall mission and will collaborate with researchers to move toward those larger goals.”

As David Wald, a seismologist with the USGS in Golden, CO, puts it, “learn where there are holes in the USGS staff” and “help us solve problems.”

Explore the wide range of work opportunities.

The USGS hires approximately 1,000 students and recent graduates each year for temporary and entry-level positions. “Some of these can lead to subsequent employment or long-term connections with USGS researchers and scientists,” Knudsen says.

Among them, summer internships, says Wald, are “a good way for you to learn more about us and vice versa.” Other opportunities include the National Association of Geoscience Teachers - (https://nagt.org/nagt/about/sponsored_prog.html), the Mendenhall Research Fellowship program (<https://geology.usgs.gov/postdoc/>), interagency personnel agreements for people with university positions, contract work and volunteering.

Knudsen reminds readers to keep in mind the many operational positions that aren’t research track roles. “For example, a significant fraction of the USGS staff working in the USGS Earthquake Hazards Program are members of seismic and geodetic monitoring projects.”

Make the most of professional meetings.

Attend scientific gatherings like the SSA Annual Meeting and take advantage of networking opportunities with researchers and scientists.

“Present talks and posters in the areas of research that you are interested in pursuing where USGS researchers will be involved,” says Wald. “Use these opportunities to learn more about (and even help make) opportunities through the current channels: internships, research grants, informal or formal research collaboration and post-doctoral positions.”

Lastly, don’t hesitate to approach professionals in your field. “Most people are excited when others show interest in their work and are happy to help students or other scientists understand the work and its significance,” Knudsen says.

For more information on USGS employment, visit <https://www2.usgs.gov/humancapital/hr/usgsemployment.html>



Meet Us in Miami

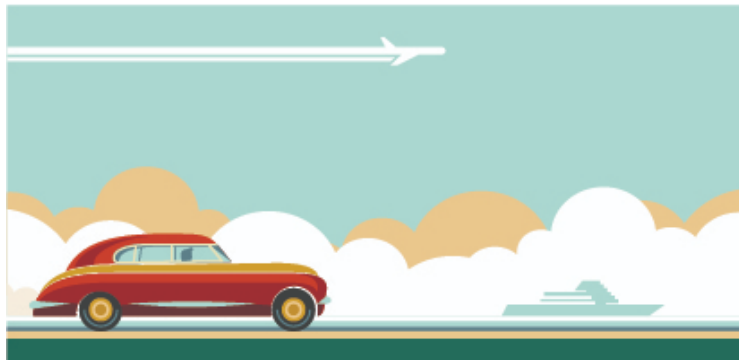
Don’t miss the Annual Meeting—your opportunity to network with leaders in your field, share your research with the SSA community and advance your career. Register today and enjoy an exciting lineup of events, including:

A workshop with editors at *Science*, *SRL* and *BSSA*, who will reveal what makes an excellent peer-reviewed paper and how to handle constructive—and not so constructive—reviews.

A special mentoring breakfast with SSA pros ready to answer all your burning career-related questions.

SSA's first Women in Seismology reception, an hour to establish new connections and reunite with friends in the field.

Visit seismology2018.org for more information.



Reminder: Global Travel Grants Due Soon

This month only: all students who have been SSA members for at least one year are invited to apply for Global Travel Grants to attend any workshops or small meetings in the U.S. or abroad that support their study of earthquake science or seismology.

SSA will accept applications until 28 February for travel between 1 April and 30 September 2018. Decisions will be announced in mid-March.

For more details and an online application form, visit

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeux9htngJRALopPmrN3HzPAYvLobeLPj8Bllhonk8DI1t1A/viewform>

Please note: this travel grant does not provide funds for SSA's Annual Meeting.

Stay in Touch

We'll be back in April with a new issue, including a look at plagiarism, tips on making the most of the Annual Meeting and quite possibly, an article suggested by you. Send us your thoughts and ideas: seismogram@seismosoc.org.



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