

PIVOT Resources

What's Inside

Transitioning out of the federal government means leaving your job with a federal agency, which typically involves assessing your transferable skills, updating your resume to highlight those skills, actively networking within your desired industry, and utilizing career transition programs like the Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP) to find new employment, either within another government agency or in the private sector.

Key points to consider when transitioning out of the federal government:

Identify transferable skills:

Analyze your current role to pinpoint skills like project management, analytical thinking, communication, leadership, and policy development that are valuable across different industries.

Network strategically:

Leverage your existing professional network within the government and reach out to contacts in your desired industry to learn about potential opportunities.

Don't be afraid to share why you're job hunting.

Think outside of the box. You may have built assumptions about what your career should look like, sit with those assumptions and decide what you absolutely need and what changes you are willing to make.

Resume and cover letter tailoring:

Adapt your resume to highlight relevant skills and experiences for specific private sector roles, focusing on achievements and quantifiable results.

To the extent possible, keep your resume to one or two pages and remove technical terms that those outside of the government reading your resume may not be familiar with.

Tailor your cover letter to the employer and use it as the first opportunity to tell your story. Sharing what motivates you to make a mid or late stage career shift can show your potential employer that you are interested in and passionate about the work they do and the communities they serve.

Ensure any AI produced work is edited to your voice. Many job seekers are using AI for support, resulting in identical application materials especially in cover letters.

Career transition programs:

Explore programs like the ICTAP which provides priority hiring consideration for federal employees transitioning to other government agencies.

Understand post-employment restrictions:

Be aware of potential ethical restrictions on contacting former colleagues or engaging in lobbying activities after leaving government service.

Steps to take for a smooth transition:

Consult with your agency HR:

Get information about your retirement benefits, severance pay, and eligibility for career transition assistance programs.

Assess your career goals:

Determine if you want to stay within the government, move to a different agency, or transition to the private sector.

Research target industries:

Identify industries that align with your skills and interests within the private sector.

Develop a job search strategy:

Utilize online job boards, professional networking platforms, and direct outreach to potential employers.

Prepare for interviews:

Practice answering questions about your federal experience and how your skills translate to the private sector.

The Little Details:

- Transitioning Out of a Position
 - HR/Ethics
 - To the extent possible, ask your HR all of your questions in writing and cc your personal email
 - Gov't systems are different and you'll have different access to them post-employment; if you can, ask HR when access for each ends
 - eOPF should have your SF-50s, performance reviews, etc; those are your records so save/print them
 - Keep performance reviews for at least the last 3 years
 - Make sure your current employer has your personal contact info, including email and address (for W2s, etc.)
 - Understand exactly when your benefits end; remember vision/dental might end sooner than health
 - While still employed, print/save your E&L statement each pay period; DEFINITELY have a copy of your last E&L statement before you leave
 - If they haven't been RIFed, reach out to your agency ethics office with questions
 - Keep in mind that different security clearances or political roles may have other considerations
 - Keeping Things
 - Don't steal government property, but take all YOUR stuff
 - Consult your agency-issued hand receipts for GFE; make sure you return those things
 - Be aware of agency document retention policies and follow them; don't delete/shred things your agency is required to keep and do what you can to get those things into whatever system of record used by your agency for that thing
 - Keep in mind that your agency can see (a) what you email and (b) what you print out; this shouldn't stop you from keeping things, but be aware
 - Anything public-facing is fair game; take/save a copy (you may particularly want to keep resources and guidance that this administration is likely to pull down off of government websites)
 - Keep anything related to your employment (e.g., performance reviews; emails from HR or your supervisor relating to your separation)
 - If you need a writing sample, ask for permission to use a redacted version of what you wrote
 - When in doubt, ask a supervisor
 - Contacts
 - Remember that your work email and number will be gone and even your OOO will stop as soon as your email is decommissioned
 - OOO should state you're gone and who people can reach for anything related to your work (understanding that info might not be available these days); you know who emails you regularly so you should know who's going to see your OOO and can adjust accordingly
 - If possible, don't rely on OOO and send contacts any important information (and personal contact info) beforehand
 - Don't include your personal contact info in your OOO; remember EVERYONE who emails you gets that
 - Give anyone you want to keep in touch with your personal email/number; flipside: DON'T give personal email/number if you don't want someone to be able to reach you

RESOURCES

Transition Guide 2024 (federal government) - <https://chcoc.gov/sites/default/files/Presidential-Transition-Guide-2024.pdf>

OPM – Career Transition - <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/workforce-restructuring/employee-guide-to-career-transition/>

Guide - https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/workforce-restructuring/employee-guide-to-career-transition/ctap_guideline.PDF

OPM Workforce Restructuring - <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/workforce-restructuring/>

USAJobs Career Transition Help Center - <https://help.usajobs.gov/working-in-government/unique-hiring-paths/federal-employees/career-transition>

D.C. Bar Lawyer Assistance Program offers free and confidential services to support you during times of change. If you want individual support, email LAP@dcbar.org or call 202-347-3131.