Science Careers at NIH/other govt positions

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Outline

• Why employers seek people with a PhD
• Jobs at NIH
• Jobs elsewhere
• Examples
Why employers seek people with a PhD

- Ability to complete complicated projects with minimal supervision
- Ability to master new subject matter with little guidance
- Accustomed to solving problems
- Ability to analyze complex data
- Ability to communicate clearly
- 24/7 Intellectual commitment; not expecting 9-5 work effort
Examples of Jobs at NIH

• Program Directors and Analysts
• Scientific Review Officers
• Policy Officers and Analysts
• Science Writers; Communications
• Clinical Trial Managers
• IT
Jobs “Elsewhere”

- Analysts
- Communicators
- Editors
- Fund raisers
- Managers of scientific portfolios
- Policy makers
- Lobbyists
Where is “Elsewhere”? 

- Federal agencies: NSF, VA, DOD, FDA, CDC
- Foundations: Bill & Melinda Gates, Howard Hughes, Disease Foundations
- Non-govt orgs (NGO’s): National Academy of Science, AAAS, Foundation for Biomedical Research
- Publishers

* Note, this list is FAR from complete.
How do you identify these jobs at NIH and “elsewhere” and position yourself to get one?

• The NIH BEST program is intended to provide this information
How to find NIH (or other federal) jobs

• Specific ads (USA Jobs)
• Government and agency-wide programs
  – AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellowships
  – Presidential Management Fellowships
  – HHS Emerging Leaders Program
How to find NIH (or other federal) jobs

Presidential Management Fellowships
– Recently expanded to include a STEM track.
– Two-year appointment with leadership development training - upon certification of completion, fellows are converted to permanent or term federal positions with a full salary and benefits package.
– Eligibility - last year of graduate school and up to 2 years after degree completion http://www.pmf.gov/the-opportunity/pmf-stem.aspx.
What Can I Apply For?

At NIH we understand that applying for a federal position can be confusing. The following is information to help you, the applicant, navigate the federal personnel system as you pursue a career in the Federal service.

GENERAL SCHEDULE

The “General Schedule” (GS) is the basic classification and compensation schedule for white collar federal jobs. (For salary information, visit the Office of Personnel Management’s pay tables.) The “Federal Wage System” (FWS) covers Federal blue collar occupations.

In the Federal GS classification system, “occupational groups” consist of related occupations grouped together numerically within the same multiple of 100. Under each group are a number of “occupational series.” For example, “GS-600” is the Medical, Hospital, Dental, and Public Health Group. Included in this Group is the Nurse Series, GS-610, the Pharmacist Series, GS-660, and the Environmental Health Technician Series, GS-698.

The duties and responsibilities assigned to most positions are covered by one occupational series. Some positions are a mix of duties and responsibilities covered by two or more series. Often the appropriate series for these positions is a general series for the occupational group covering the type of work performed. The Office of Personnel Management’s Handbook of Occupational Groups and Families describes each occupational group and series.

An interdisciplinary professional position is a position involving duties and responsibilities closely related to more than one professional occupation. For example, the duties of a position assigned research work in the environmental responses of certain living organisms may be accomplished by an employee trained in either biology or physiology. Thus, the position could be classified to either the
Networking

- Important to develop (and maintain) professional contacts: meaningful ones
- Impressions: every talk or poster you give you can think of as a job interview
- Meet people: talk to vendors at meetings, people in the publication industry, etc....
Our two paths to NIH

• Trish Labosky: PhD, postdoc (4.5 yrs.), Faculty (15 yrs.) with tenure and excellent grant/publication record. Moved to NIH to be able to affect science on a larger level.

• Steve Korn: PhD, postdoc (5 years), Faculty (15 yrs) with tenure and excellent grant/publication record. Moved to NIH to train scientists on a national level.
Bethany Brookshire: PhD, postdoc (3 yrs).

• Began an award-winning science blog under the moniker “Scicurious” while in graduate school at Wake Forest University, continued writing through a post-doctoral position at U Penn.

• Developed expertise on Twitter and Facebook while building a network of science writing mentors.

• Became a freelance writer in 2013 and a staff journalist at Science News 6 months later.

• Currently the Science Education Writer for Science News for Students

• Moved to science journalism to share the wonder and complexity of science with a broad audience.

• Began appearing at conferences to train scientists in communicating with the public.

• Bethany.brookshire@gmail.com, Twitter: @scicurious
Liza Bundesen, PhD, No postdoc

- Science and Technology Policy Fellow (6 months)
  - Sponsored by the Christine Mirzayan Science and Technology Policy Fellowship Program, the National Academies
  - Fellowship placement at *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (PNAS) journal
  - Continued as freelance science writer for PNAS for 1 ½ years after the fellowship ended
- Science and Technology Policy Fellow (2 years)
  - Sponsored by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)
  - Fellowship placement at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH): Office of Science Policy, Planning, & Communications; Science Policy & Evaluation Branch
- Health Science Policy Analyst, NIMH (2 years, 4 months)
- Acting Chief, Science Policy & Evaluation Branch, NIMH (3 years, 8 months)
- Chief, Science Policy & Evaluation Branch, NIMH (1 year, 11 months)
- Science Policy Advisor to the NIH Deputy Director for Extramural Research (3 months)
- Using communication skills to inform policy decisions
No matter what, you have to be “GOOD”

• Track record of success—both scientifically and programmatically
• Excellent communication skills—present yourself well
• Ability to work independently and in a team
• Initiative
• Understand your abilities—be honest, but do not undersell yourself
Links for more information

- Christine Mirzayan Science and Technology Policy Graduate Fellowship program at the National Academies [http://sites.nationalacademies.org/PGA/policyfellows/index.htm](http://sites.nationalacademies.org/PGA/policyfellows/index.htm)
- A helpful resource compiled by the Congressional Research Service in 2012 titled “Internships, Fellowships, and Other Work Experience Opportunities in the Federal Government”: [http://www.senate.gov/CRSReports/crs-publish.cfm?pid=%26*2%3C4Q%2CO%3F%0A](http://www.senate.gov/CRSReports/crs-publish.cfm?pid=%26*2%3C4Q%2CO%3F%0A)
- Potomac Institute [http://www.potomacinstitute.org/contact-us/interns](http://www.potomacinstitute.org/contact-us/interns)
- White House OSTP [http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ostp/about/student](http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ostp/about/student)