

This resource was created to help Finalists understand what “Job Series” and “Pay Scale” means in layman’s terms. Pay Scale is defined by Pay Grade and Step. See the various links referenced below for general policies and guidance on these topics.

PAY PLAN (GS-0343-12-01): The General Schedule (GS) is the Federal Government’s most common pay plan. Some agencies have their own pay plan, but will advertise positions based on the GS equivalent. This document will explain each of the numbers and what they mean in PMF appointment opportunities.

JOB SERIES (Occupation Group/Job Series: GS-0343-12-01): The Occupation Group and Job Series describes what it is the job entails. For the example here, “0343” is the Job Series (under Management and Program Analysis Series, with a common Position Title of Management and Program Analyst), within the “0300” Occupational Group (General Administrative, Clerical, and Office Services Group). The “0343” is the most common Job Series for PMF postings.

The Occupation Groups and Job Series are maintained by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and used across the Federal Government. More information about them can be found at OPM’s website at:

<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/classification-qualifications/classifying-general-schedule-positions/>.

PAY SCALE (Pay Grade (GS-0343-12-01) and Step (GS-0343-12-01)): If the Job Series and the Occupation Group tells you what you will do in the job, then the Pay Grade and Step will tell you how much you will be paid. OPM produces the nationwide Salary Tables by Geographic Locations, usually updated in January, and can be found at <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/>. Some agencies have their own classification and pay systems. Federal employees will never be paid less than the base pay for the grade and step identified, and depending on their locality they may be paid more.

Grade Levels are numbered 1-15 and serve as salary bands. Most PMF positions start at Grade 9, Step 1 (GS-9-01), unless there is work experience to support starting at a higher grade/step and the position covers multiple grade levels. Finalists can only be initially appointed to the GS-9/11/12 (or equivalent) and Fellows may promote as high as a GS-13 (or equivalent) during the fellowship; assuming the position has a career ladder and promotion potential.

For the examples below, the position must have promotion potential to a higher grade. **All Fellows must obtain 1 year of specialized experience at their current grade level before being minimally eligible for a promotion.** Promotions are at the supervisor’s discretion and, generally, a Fellow must have a current performance rating of minimally successful.

- **GS-9:** This is the typical rate that PMFs are hired at. With no additional specialized experience, this is the grade that applies to Finalists and Fellows holding advanced degrees other than a professional or doctorate degree.
- **GS-10:** Exists but is used very infrequently. See the following Federal Times article that explains this at: <https://www.federaltimes.com/management/hr/2020/07/01/why-there-are-so-few-gs-10-positions-in-government/>.
- **GS-11:** This is the rate that Finalists holding a doctorate degree are generally hired at, when they have no additional specialized experience. After one year at the GS-9 grade level, Fellows are generally minimally eligible for promotion to a GS-11.

- **GS-12:** This is the rate that advanced Finalists are generally hired at (e.g., degrees, experience, specialized skills, etc.). After one year at the GS-11 grade level, Fellows are generally minimally eligible for promotion to GS-12.
- **GS-13:** After one year at the GS-12 grade level, Fellows are generally minimally eligible for promotion to GS-13.
- **GS-14:** This is the grade generally reserved for highly specialized and valued positions.
- **GS-15:** This is the highest grade available for Federal employees, typically reserved for supervisors or managers, and extremely specialized. Any advancement past this grade would be going into the Senior Executive Service.

Each grade level has **Steps**, which are numbered 1-10 and allow for regular and automatic pay raises. Employees can move up from Steps 1-3 annually, Steps 4-6 every other year, and Steps 7-9 every three years. Generally, a new employee will be hired at step 1, but you may be able to negotiate a higher step; this is based on experience, qualifications, and at the hiring agency's discretion. A step increase is commonly referred to as a WIGI (Within-Grade Increase). Steps are not necessarily automatic as they require your supervisor's approval and a minimally successful performance level. With each step, the salary increases.

OTHER FACTORS:

- **Resume:** Ensure your resume includes all relevant work and volunteer experience and the amount of time you spent on each of those experiences, this helps an agency HR office to determine your qualifications and at what grade level. Federal resume writing tips can be found on the USAJOBS website at: <https://www.usajobs.gov/Help/faq/application/documents/resume/what-to-include/>.
- **Salary Match:** If you have previous work experience and want to try to match your previous salary, you must submit proof to the agency HR office; they will not be able to match your salary without it. You can ask about this, but it is at the agency's discretion.
- **Superior Qualifications** is the process by which agencies may submit a request to negotiate your initial salary above a Step 1 for the grade level. Your resume must be able to support these types of requests; these are rare and agencies may have policies in place where making this request may not be possible. Additional information can be found on OPM's website at: <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/pay-administration/fact-sheets/superior-qualifications-and-special-needs-pay-setting-authority/>.
- **Full Performance Level:** Most PMF positions have a "career ladder" of 9/11/12/13 with a Full Performance Level (FPL) of a GS-13. To move past a position's FPL a Federal employee will either need to be hired for another job or compete for a more advanced version of their job. Finalists should inquire about a position's career ladder when considering a position. The FPL for the PMF position is identified in the PMF appointment opportunity. A Finalist initially hired into a PMF position with an established FPL cannot reappoint to a different PMF position/agency with a higher FPL; this is because the Fellow did not initially compete for the newer position.
- **Advanced Degree Completion:** For those Finalists who are current graduates, once you have completed all advanced degree requirements (including the successful defense/completion of any required thesis/dissertation), you must upload an updated transcript as part of your profile on the Apply Site of the PMF TMS (Talent Management System). The transcript can be unofficial. An agency may require proof of your completion of your advanced degree. Some positions have a positive education requirement; meaning, an Engineer position requires a degree in engineering. And some positions require certain courses and credit hours; for example, a Contract Specialist may require a set number of course and hours in accounting/finance/budget.

Direct any questions about the position to the Agency Contact identified in the announcement.