Day 1 Session 4: How to Navigate Your Federal Job Search

**Mininia Hawkins:** Welcome to the first day of the 2020 Virtual Military Spouse Symposium. My name is Mininia Hawkins with the Department of Defense Military Community Support Programs Office, the host for this week’s symposium.

Our speaker today is Kristina Santos, a career coach for the Spouse Education and Career Opportunities Program. Ms. Santos is going to discuss federal employment. She will cover the critical components of the application and selection process as well as additional tools and strategies to help you master your pursuit of federal employment. Welcome Ms. Santos.

**Kristina Santos:** Thank you, Mininia. And welcome again everyone to the first day of the 2020 Virtual Military Spouse Symposium. As mentioned, my name is Kristina, and I’ve been part of the SECO team as a career coach here for over six years. I am also a military spouse and I’m honored to be part of this military family with each of you, and I thank you for entrusting me with your time.

Employment with the federal government provides many options, opportunities and unique benefits, making it a great flexible and portable option for military spouses trying to keep pace with military life.

The goal of today’s webinar is to provide you with resources, strategies and support you can take advantage of right away and throughout your federal job search. Our agenda today includes exploring SECO services that will help you successfully navigate your federal job search and find your fit in the federal government. We will also demonstrate the federal application process from start to finish. This includes how to register and build your profile on USAJOBS, narrow your job search, build your resume and application, prepare for the interview, and accept the offer.

We will have a question-and-answer session at the end, and I have a team that is working with me today, so feel free to ask questions throughout today’s presentation.

I do want to bring up the poll questions again. Many of you answered while you were entering into today’s webinar. We do have them back up. If you did not get a chance to respond, please take a moment to do so now. The very first question reads, “What is the most challenging part of finding a federal job?” And thank you so much, I see we already have a lot of responses here today. It looks like there’s quite
a bit of a range, but for most of you joining us, all of the above, from preparing your resume, the interview, understanding the application process. So thank you all so much for filling this out. And we are going to cover each of these areas today so if you did choose all of the above, we’re going to get to a lot of these different parts of finding a federal job.

The second question reads, “How familiar are you with SECO services?” And it looks like for most of you today it is your very first time using SECO services. So welcome. If you have used other SECO services, welcome back. We are glad that you’re here.

And we’re actually going to start with the SECO program. The Department of Defense’s Spouse Education and Career Opportunities program, SECO provides individualized education and career support to military spouses worldwide. As we dive deeper into finding your fit in the federal government and navigating the federal hiring process, we want you to know the SECO program is here to partner with you on this journey.

The program is designed to help you, a military spouse, set and reach your career goals while bravely balancing the demands of military life. This includes a robust website that we see here where you have unlimited access to education and career planning tools at no cost to you. Here you can find ways to connect with SECO career coaches that can assist you with exploring careers, your education, training and licensing needs, employment readiness, and making career connections. So make an appointment with a SECO career coach. You can either call the SECO Career Center at 800-342-9647, or you can use our chat feature right on the MySECO portal.

No matter where you find yourself when it comes to gaining federal employment, we have something for you. Military spouses can also use SECO career coaching services to assist with clarifying career goals and investigating options, going back to school, maximizing job search efforts, conducting mock interviews, personalized resume reviews, networking, and our career coaching consultations all take place over the phone.

And the truth is, your career makes up all the roles you play in a lifetime and we understand that military spouse is often the role that takes top priority. We also understand that no two careers look exactly alike. Our SECO career coaching packages give military spouses an opportunity to work continuously with your very own SECO career coach. We offer industry-specific coaching packages as well as career transition coaching packages. For example, our SECO federal employment coaching package is designed for military spouses like you who are interested in, or currently pursuing federal employment.

And selecting a coaching package is just the beginning. You can then connect with your SECO career coach as often as you’d like. This could be on a weekly basis or, I’ve worked with many military spouses through a PCS move, and we might speak once a month or every couple months. This way we can get to know the challenges you are facing and we also become witnesses of your story and can help remind you
of your unique strengths and skills and the resources available to you. Each consultation is tailored to you and your goals. And this can be extremely helpful in navigating the competitive federal hiring process.

So, now that you know you have resources and services available to you, what opportunities await? The federal government consists of hundreds of agencies and organizations. We will show you how to research these options, but first we do recommend researching yourself. After all it would be great to find a job but it would be even better to find the right job for you. The best way to discover where you fit and to demonstrate how you fit in the federal government is to identify your interests and skills, gather your education training and experience, prepare your resume content, and explore federal opportunities. The more self-awareness you have on your skills, values and interests, the more aligned your goals will be with your authentic self.

If you’re with me today and you want to gain clarity on your interests, skills and values, the MySECO portal holds industry-leading career and personality tests.

Traitify is SECO’s newest assessment. It is a visual personality assessment that only takes about 90 seconds to complete and can be used to explore your personality blends, traits, complements, conflicts, environments and career matches. You obtain your results instantly and you can also review them with a SECO career coach. This can help build your confidence in not only knowing where you want to go as we navigate your federal job search together, but you will also build confidence in your own strengths and abilities that will help you get there.

I know each of you have faced adversity in your life. Remember to ask yourself what assets and skills have gotten me this far? Relying on those strengths, the strategic planning and perseverance will give you endurance for your federal job search. And part of this planning includes gathering your education, training and experience sources.

Here we have a list of sources you can use to uncover and gather details about your background. Education and training sources might include your transcripts, course feedback, maybe some special projects or awards and recognitions or travel experiences. And experience sources may include formal job description, former job descriptions, customer acknowledgments, or survey results, military honors, volunteer experience, leadership roles, projects and other travel experiences.

Gathering these details takes time, but it can help you upload required documents early in the federal application process, and it can also help you craft compelling resume content. Be patient and creative when it comes to researching yourself. And to help you brainstorm we have another activity for you. Please take a moment to think about all the roles that you play. As you’re brainstorming, also keep in mind the different hats you wear in each of those roles. You are not just a military spouse, stay-at-home mom, nurse, lawyer, secretary, cashier, manager, a marketing specialist. Even in one job you may wear several different hats. I know especially
right now many of us are wearing a lot of different hats all at once. Maybe you were a mentor or a motivator for new hires. Maybe you were a fundraising coordinator or project manager, a problem solver or writer. What roles do you play that truly describe who you are, what you do and how well you do it?

Please take a moment to brainstorm and share some of the hats you wear and roles you play in your life. And I see quite a few responses coming in. I know for myself, I take pride in being a mentor, a coach, a researcher as well. Accountant. We have an Uber driver, encourager, nurse, troubleshooter, chef, tutor, mom, teacher, Key Spouse coordinator, mentor. These are great. Thank you all so much for these responses. It looks like we have many gifted and talented individuals here today that are doing a lot of different things and making a huge difference in your own homes and in the community. This activity can help as you prepare your resume content, because within each and every role you play, you are building and using different knowledge, skills and abilities. And you’re also making an impact.

According to the Office of Personnel Management, who serves as the chief human resources for the federal government, the best way to prepare your resume content is to include answers to two questions: What did you do and how well did you do it? Providing your experience will help you answer the question, what did you do?

So as you’re preparing your experience for your resume, be sure to include the amounts of experience. We have an example here, such as managed a 12-person team for over 15 years. You also want to include the level of experience when you can. For example routinely advised and briefed organizational senior executives. That’s the level that you’re working with and the individuals that you’re working with within your corporation. This will help you deliver and demonstrate the different roles you play and your action. So, the knowledge, skills, and abilities and the process.

The second question you want your resume to answer is how well did you do it? What makes you stand out among other candidates? What role and what are you the most proud of?

The Office of Personnel Management recommends developing content on your resume that includes your experience and accomplishment. Here we have a list of questions you can ask yourself to brainstorm your results, who was impacted, what were the cost savings, did you generate revenue or reduce cost, did you exceed deadlines, did you receive any awards or recognition, what changed or improved because of you. This helps you answer why they should hire you over others and ultimately this demonstrates your value.

So here we have an example of resume content for an auditor’s resume. Routinely advised and briefed organizational senior executives on audit reports, identifying weak internal controls and accounting procedures. Created a new standard operating procedure which resulted in a 10% decrease in errors and $52,000 in labor savings.
Investing time in researching yourself, gathering your education, training and experience in preparing your resume content, will help you own and share your story, just like this example. Providing your experiences and accomplishments will help you share stories throughout your resume that are memorable, believable and valuable. Everything you want in a federal resume. And preparing your resume content in advance can help you tailor your resume and still meet the job posting deadlines. After all, some federal job postings close once they receive a certain number of applications. So, efficiency is crucial. Prioritizing this preparation can also help you gain clarity on your career goals to help you narrow your focus as you explore the wide range of opportunities available through federal employment.

The following websites are key to researching, exploring, navigating, and applying for positions in the federal government. USAJOBS.gov is the federal government’s official employment website. Here you can discover openings within hundreds of agencies and organizations. USAJOBS is not only where you can search and apply for federal jobs, it is an information gateway with features like the help center that include sections like how-to, frequently asked question and working in government. To help you succeed, you can even access a list of upcoming events such as webinars on navigating USAJOBS, different hiring events, and webinars on writing a federal resume.

We’re going to spend most of our time today discussing how to navigate your federal job search using USAJOBS.gov. OPM.gov is the website for the Office of Personnel Management, also known as OPM, and we did refer to OPM earlier when we discussed preparing your resume content. OPM does serve as the chief human resources and personnel policy manager for the federal government. In fact, the USAJOBS website is part of the United States Office of Personnel Management, so they are USAJOBS experts. Many of the events or webinars listed on USAJOBS are actually hosted by OPM.

OPM.gov is also where you can access more information on the general schedule. Most of you probably are familiar with that, also known as GS. The GS classification standards, qualifications, pay structure, and related human resources, related policies that are administered by OPM. So, this is a great place to start for additional research.

There’s truly something for everyone when it comes to federal employment. And while most federal agencies post their jobs on USAJOBS, some posts on their agency website. You can access each agency’s website from the index of U.S. agencies and departments on USA.gov. This can help you connect to additional job postings not listed on USAJOBS, as well as additional details about each agency, such as their mission statement that may be great material as you prepare your application or prepare for the interview.

Something that also recently came up that is relevant to current events, are by accessing USAJOBS/coronavirus you can also obtain a list of open, mission-critical job postings to help the federal government respond to the COVID-19 emergency.
And also several federal agencies are also MSEP partners. So, if you’re new to SECO services, MSEP stands for the Military Spouse Employment Partnership. It is made up of over 430 companies and organizations who have joined because they’re committed to recruiting, hiring, retaining and promoting military spouses. The Department of Veterans Affairs, United States Department of Homeland Security and the United States Small Business Administration are all MSEP partners who have acknowledged that they have open positions. So, from the MySECO portal, military spouses can connect to the MSEP job search tool to search for jobs and connect to a list of all MSEP partners looking to hire military spouses. So, hopefully now you are feeling inspired by these opportunities and supported by the SECO services available to help you go after them.

So, where should you actually start? Now we are going to dive deep into navigating your federal job search. This slide presents the nine steps of the federal application process from the USAJOBS home page. We can select Federal Application Process to find a list of these nine steps, which includes what takes place on USAJOBS as well as once your application is transferred to the agency for review. From this part of the website, we can click on each of the steps for more information. Learning about these critical components of the federal hiring process is an excellent strategy during your search for federal employment.

So, let’s go through each of these steps. Step number one is to create a USAJOBS profile. In order to apply for federal jobs, you first need to create a login.gov account and complete your USAJOBS profile. When you select Sign In from the USAJOBS homepage, this box will appear prompting you to sign in with your username and password or to register for USAJOBS account.

Once you register and sign in, you can then select your name at the top right-hand side of the page to access your USAJOBS dashboard. When you first access your dashboard, you will notice an invitation to complete your profile before you are able to apply for jobs. By selecting Complete Profile, you can then provide the necessary information, including your contact information, citizenship, hiring past, experience, education, demographics, languages, organizations and references. In reference to hiring paths, when you fill out your USAJOBS profile information USAJOBS will automatically help you select one or more hiring paths based on the information you provide. And you can select more than one, but also under the section of USAJOBS titled Explore Hiring Paths, you can review each hiring path and your eligibility. Agencies use these paths to tell USAJOBS who they are looking for when they are hiring.

Many of you joining me today will want to select Military Spouses to learn more. From here, you can learn more about the eligibility requirements and what documents may be required. So if you’re a military spouse, you may be eligible to apply using a non-competitive process.

And once you have completed your USAJOBS profile, you are ready for step number two, which is to search for jobs. USAJOBS provide different options for search
features when conducting your job search, including a basic search, profile and preferences search, advanced search, and the ability to save searches. From your USAJOBS dashboard, you can conduct a basic search by keywords such as job title, department, agency, series or occupation. But also by location, such as city, state, zip code or country. For example, the search on this slide was done by series. The O300 series is for management, administrative and clerical services positions.

USAJOBS will also automatically add the ability to search based on the information in your USAJOBS profile and preferences. From your USAJOBS dashboard, you can select the preferences tab to answer a series of questions related to travel and relocation as well as appointment type and work schedule. When you conduct a basic search on USAJOBS, you’ll notice filters from your profile and preferences are automatically added to your search results.

Here we have eight filters from your profile that are being used for this search. Please note you do have the option of turning this search feature off when you are conducting your search. And on the right-hand side of your search results you can also find advanced search options. From here you can select from top filters such as hiring path, pay, grade, department and agency, and series. You can also select from more filters such as location, work schedule, appointment type, security clearance and travel percentage. Also from the results page you will notice an option to select Save this search. By selecting Save this search, a new box will appear that will allow you to name the search and select your notification frequency. For example, if you select Daily and then select Save, you will receive emails from USAJOBS daily when new jobs become available that match exactly what you are looking for. By selecting Save search from your USAJOBS dashboard you can now see your list of saved searches, the date it was created and the alert frequency.

Once you have mastered how to search for jobs, the third step in the federal application process is to review the job announcement. So, here’s a sample job announcement from USAJOBS. Be sure to read each section before applying. You will notice each section of the job announcement has a tab at the top starting with Overview. Other sections include locations, duties, requirements, required documents, benefits and how to apply. Also review the right-hand side of the job announcement to see who the job is open to and any clarification notes from the agency. For example, is the job announcement open to the public, military spouses, veterans or internal to an agency. Remember, you can also select specific hiring paths, such as military spouse.

When you are searching for jobs, if you find a specific job posting in your list of results that you are interested in but maybe now’s not the best time to apply – maybe you’re on your lunch break or you need to gather some additional information – you can also save a specific job posting by selecting save under the apply option of the job announcement. This job posting will now appear in your dashboard onto your list of saved jobs to make it easier to find in the future.
Jobs and searches is an excellent strategy when it comes to pursuing federal employment. It can help you save time and energy during your search and the application process. It can also ensure you do not miss out on an opportunity.

Once you have reviewed and found the right job announcement, you are ready to prepare your application in USAJOBS. Step number four involves uploading your supporting documents, preparing your federal resume, and reviewing the how to apply section of the job announcement for additional requirements. From your USAJOBS dashboard, you will select the documents tab to upload your supporting documents and also to upload or build your resume. By selecting Other, you can then select Name, and upload your supporting documents. You want to be sure to upload these again early in the application process. The documents you will need to have ready depend on the position to which you are applying and on your background. For example, if you are a veteran you may be asked to upload your DD214. And we can see some examples of other common document types here, including transcripts, SF-50, SF15 and more.

Now before we get into preparing your federal resume, which I know a lot of you are excited about, I do have another quick poll question for you. If you could please select the hands up icon on the top of your screen if you have ever created a federal resume. OK, so I see quite a few hands going up. So, it sounds like a lot of you have gone through the process of actually developing a federal resume. So, thank you so much. I’m so happy that some of you have familiarity with this as we go through each of these sections. I know a lot of you have a lot of questions about this.

When it comes to preparing your federal resume, we want to examine the differences between a private-sector and federal resume. We will review a federal resume checklist and how to tailor your resume. We will also demonstrate how to upload or build a federal resume, including an overview of the USAJOBS resume builder tool and how you can actually make your resume searchable.

So, to get started, here we actually have a chart comparing elements of a private-sector resume to a federal resume. I love starting with this because seeing the differences can help you understand that because of these differences the strategy and technique of writing a federal resume is very different than how you would write your private-sector resume.

So, when it comes to the job announcement and meeting the qualifications, federal resumes must demonstrate that you meet all the qualifications in the job announcement. So these are considered the minimum. Federal resumes are much more detailed, so they focus on the content and building a big picture of your specific experience and accomplishments. You will notice the length of a private-sector resume is typically one to two pages but a federal resume has no limit unless otherwise noted by the agency. This means repetition, especially of keywords in the job announcement, is helpful throughout your resume to demonstrate your general and specialized experience.
While a skill section may be helpful in a private-sector resume, federal resumes, again, they build the picture. They want to see your skills and abilities and accomplishments actually shared in context and anchored to specific dates. So, here we have a federal resume checklist that you can use whether you've crafted a federal resume in the past, which I know many of you have, or if you're actually developing and tailoring one for the very first time.

The preferred federal resume format is reverse chronological. This means you begin with your most recent experience and work backwards. As mentioned, federal resumes have no page limitations, so repetition is helpful. You just want to be sure that you're including relevant content to the job announcement.

Check your federal resume to ensure you have no spelling or grammatical errors. No matter what position you are applying to, explain acronyms and avoid jargon. The reason for this is because your resume may first be read by someone in the human resources department who is not as familiar with the technical terms or jargon of your industry. So write your federal resume in plain language that is easy to understand and leaves no doubt. Do not make any assumptions about who is reading your resume.

And this does bring me again to the content. Unlike a private-sector resume that focuses on accomplishments and results, the human resources specialist and the hiring official want to see a federal resume that includes your results and accomplishments but they want to see those accomplishments in context. So, they also want to see the process. How did you actually get there? What are the skills and abilities that you demonstrated? We began building this content when we discussed preparing your resume to include the amount and level of experience as well as your accomplishments. But now you have to take your resume to the next level by tailoring it to the specific job posting. In this competitive job market, crafting a tailored federal resume with all the required information is imperative to successful federal employment.

For many federal positions, as a lot of you may know, your resume is your application and it could be your first and maybe your only impression. So here we have three steps to help you with tailoring your federal resume.

Step number one is to review the job opportunity announcement. Step number two is to identify keywords, and step number three is to align your experience and accomplishments to the JOA. So, I do want to make a note to say that a job posting on USAJOBS.gov is oftentimes referred to as the JOA. It stands for the job opportunity announcement. So, the goals of this first step, review the JOA, are to understand the requirements that you can then select in, which means you're going to spend time applying, to the position or out, which means you decide not to apply.

If you choose to apply, you can then use the job announcement to identify keywords to tailor your resume and we can also use it to ensure we are submitting a complete application package. If we do choose to apply after reviewing the entire JOA, we can
then move to step number two, which is to identify keywords to help us tailor our resume. So now we want to focus on several specific sections of the JOA, including the duties and responsibilities section, qualifications and the occupational questionnaire, which is often linked from the JOA. Additional resources that might be helpful when researching keywords are the agency website, a mission statement, as well as through networking and social media sites.

So, here we have a screenshot of a sample duty section, which includes the job’s daily activities and responsibilities. The requirements section describes the experience, skills and other qualifications required. For the job, both sections include specific action verbs and keywords that can help you tailor your resume.

Some job opportunity announcements also have a link to what’s called the occupational questionnaire. This is used by agencies as another way of filtering the best qualified candidates. For example this JOA has a link from the requirements section. You can select the link, Click Here, to preview the job assessment questions before you apply to the job. And you want to be sure to support your answers in your resume. Here are a couple questions from a sample occupational questionnaire. Identify keywords and again, include these knowledge skills and abilities on your resume. Be sure to give yourself credit when and where you can. Be honest, but when you're filling out the occupational questionnaire, this is definitely not the time to be humble.

So, now we are going to go through another activity to help identify keywords from a requirement section of a sample JOA. This is for a position for an auditor. You can copy and paste these different sections into a Microsoft Word document. It usually looks exactly like this, and from here you can actually highlight specific action verbs and key words. So once you have identified these key words and phrases as we see here in red, you can then break them down into shorter bullet points. From this sample list of qualifications we can see our list. Some of them include plan, conduct and document results of audits or evaluation projects, coordinate audit or evaluation activities of team members, and review work of junior staff. So now we have identified specific keywords and phrases from the JOA.

The third and final step in tailoring your federal resume is to then match your skills, education, training and experience as much as possible to the JOA. Take each of the key words and phrases from the JOA and see how many experience and accomplishment statements or stories you can create. This will not only show that you are qualified for the position, but those accomplishments will also highlight how you are among the best qualified for the position. Remember repetition is OK and can actually be helpful when you’re tailoring your federal resume. Do not assume agencies will read between the lines that you have certain skills. Tailoring your resume to the JOA in as many ways as you can will leave no doubt and give you credit for all the experiences you bring to the table.

Now I know after going through that activity this does take some practice. SECO is here to help you. By scheduling a specialty consultation with a SECO career coach,
we can help you with reviewing the JOA and tailoring your federal resume. We can also help you with formatting for your federal resume. For example, we often recommend highlighting some of those keywords in all caps. And sometimes we can help you with actually building a key accomplishment section on your federal resume.

Now, once your resume is ready, you can upload or build your federal resume right from your USAJOBS dashboard. Select the documents tab in resumes where you can then select Upload or Build Resume. From here you are directed to select build resume using the USAJOBS resume builder tool or upload resume. To upload your own resume document, please note you’ll see you can add up to five resumes to help you target different types of jobs.

So here we have an overview of the USAJOBS resume builder tool. Review the how to apply section of the JOA to find out which resume format and documents are accepted by the agency. Some agencies may require you to use the builder. And even if you decide not to use the builder, it can be a great idea to become familiar with it or to fill out one of your resumes using the builder, and then you can even copy it and paste it into Word to make certain edits or update it with text enhancements. It can be really helpful because you’ll notice all the fields are required unless otherwise noted. So this can be really helpful and guarantee that you’re not leaving out anything that is required.

So, here we have a screenshot of the experience section of the resume builder. Here we also have a sample of the education section for you as well as their references and other qualifications section, which again include job-related training, language skills, organizations and affiliations, professional publications and additional information. Just to give you an overview of brainstorming other ways again that you can stand out with those different qualifications.

Now from the documents section of your USAJOBS dashboard, you can also access your saved resume or resumes. Again, you’ll notice you can save up to five. By selecting the box next to searchable, you can actually make your resume searchable on USAJOBS. Making your resume searchable provides HR specialist and hiring managers a way to actually search, match and connect your resume and profile to their job vacancies. Keep in mind, you can only make one resume searchable at a time. If your profile is complete and you make a resume searchable your profile will automatically be searchable. Only certain file types are searchable. You’ll see them here. Word, text-based PDF, text files and resumes created using the USAJOBS resume builder tool.

Now, once we have prepared our application in USAJOBS, we are ready to submit the application to the agency. When you are ready to start your application, you’ll click Apply from the job opportunity announcement. The next page will highlight the five-step application process, including where you will attach a resume and any required documents. Your progress is automatically saved and you are able to review, edit, delete and update your information throughout this process.
Once your application is ready you will be sent from USAJOBS to the agency application system where you can then submit your application. Please note, you may need to complete other agency required steps. This could be a questionnaire or uploading additional documents. The application process takes time and every job opportunity announcement and every agency should be considered separately. Carefully follow the directions in the how to apply section. I promise, your patience and your perseverance during your pursuit of federal employment will pay off.

And your work in the federal hiring process does not stop while the agency reviews your application in step number six. Be sure to track and follow your applications once they are submitted. When the agency first receives your application, the status will change to Received. Other application statuses you may see on your account that mean your job application is being considered for employment by the hiring agency, include Reviewed, Referred, Selected and Hired. Reviewed means the hiring agency has looked at your application but has not yet determined if you are qualified. The Paused statuses which you see are In Progress, and Incomplete are displayed when your job application has not been completed. So this means your job application requires further action. Stopped statuses include Canceled, Not Referred, Not Selected and Not Hired. These statuses communicate your application is no longer being considered for the job or that the agency canceled the job. And finally, the Unknown category or Unavailable status appears when USAJOBS cannot determine the status of your application. USAJOBS highlights there are a few reasons for this status. Maybe the hiring agency system did not return your status to USAJOBS or maybe you have not have logged out properly, or maybe you did not complete the application process.

Should you have any questions about your application status, refer back to the job announcement. Under the How to Apply section you’ll actually find agency contact information for additional information and assistance.

Now, the goal of step number seven is to get scheduled for an interview. First, the agency will review your application and place applicants into categories – minimally qualified versus highest qualified. Your application status will then change to referred or not referred. The hiring official will review the highest qualified applications and select applicants to interview. These interviews could be a panel, in-person, phone or video and maybe multiple rounds. Saving your complete application package, including a copy of the job announcement can be helpful for interview preparation in the future since it may take some time to be scheduled.

And SECO career coaches do offer video mock interview consultations so we can help you rehearse your responses and prepare. After the interviews are completed, a candidate will be selected to start the job offer process. The candidates not selected will then see their application status change to Not Selected. The final step of the federal hiring process is the job offer and this in and of itself is a process. The tentative job offer will be extended by the hiring agency. And if the tentative job offer is accepted, the agency will work with the candidate to finalize the onboarding and offer process. This may include additional agency requirements such as a
background investigation and additional security checks. It also involves the candidates review and negotiation of the offer. The job offer is final when the background investigation and any additional security checks are successfully completed and the candidate formally accepts the firm offer.

So now we have successfully navigated the nine steps of the federal application process. Hopefully this knowledge and understanding of what to expect can help you prepare, practice and build confidence during each step. Understanding the selection process can also help you keep your eye on your goal as you work hard to pursue federal employment. Keep up the hard work and know that we are rooting for you and we are here to help you every step of the way.

So, now we are going to prepare for answering some of your questions here today. So please let us know if you have additional questions. We really appreciate your time. And you'll see on this slide these are different ways that you can get connected with us on social media including on Facebook, on Twitter and on LinkedIn. You also noticed our contact information as well as our hours of operation so Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. until 10 p.m. Eastern time, and Saturdays from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. Eastern time.

Mininia: So, Kristina, I think we do have time for to take some questions from the audience or from the chat pod. How can you go about utilizing skills developed as a stay-at-home parent on your resume?

Kristina: That is a great question, Mininia. So, a lot of times we may actually include military spouse or stay-at-home parents actually, as a job block on your resume. And we will highlight, you know, if you're a parent you know that we will highlight all the different skills that you show in terms of managing the finances, most likely you're an event planner, you manage the household and everyone's schedules and logistics, especially if you have been through several different PCS or permanent change of station moves. That requires a lot of different skills, communication skills, being organized, being proactive, being a great listener and being a team player because a lot of times you know, your needs and priorities, you know may be taken over by the families and the military duties as well.

And so we would help you with highlighting a lot of those different skills, and we really look for what we call transferable skills, Mininia. So, a lot of times we're looking for what type of position the military spouse is looking for and what type of skills would help them, from their experience, that would then help them show that they match the job posting.

Mininia: OK. Thank you very much for that information. I have another question. So, Jamie Simpson Smith says I've heard that only spouses who are stationed overseas can use the military spouse on USAJOBS.gov. Is that true?

Kristina: Jamie, thank you so much for that question. That is not true. You are eligible to look on USAJOBS. To look at the eligibility requirements, so the requirements will show you that you can actually use this both in the United States
as well as overseas, so it is worldwide. And they do list those specific eligibility requirements for you to be a military spouse of an active-duty service member. If you are a military spouse of a service member that was killed in the line of active duty as well. And it will actually also give you a list of the documents that are required to show that you are eligible for it. So that can be really helpful when you're kind of navigating through that process.

You're also eligible if you're a spouse of a service member who is 100% disabled due to a service-connected injury. So, those are the three eligibility requirements. And then the documents that you would need to provide are listed on there. Also some examples would be a document verifying your marriage, like a marriage certificate or a copy of your spouse’s orders.

Mininia: OK. Thank you very much. So, Carrie asks, should your resume, so on your resume, should you write the verbs in present tense or past tense or active tense?

Kristina: Great question. We usually recommend writing your resume in present tense for current roles and past tense for previous roles to kind of keep it consistent that way.

Mininia: OK. I am still going through the questions. We have so many, but I want to ask Kristina, I know you speak with spouses all day long every day. What one question do you get the most from spouses regarding the federal resume process or the federal resume, period? And how do you answer that question?

Kristina: Mininia, that's a great question. Probably the two biggest pieces of gaining federal employment, especially in regards to the federal resume, is number one, to make sure that it has all the required information because if you're missing two hours per week that you worked, or if you're missing your employer’s name or address, those are ways that you would easily not move on to being in the highest-qualified category. That it's just information that you can research ahead of time and make sure that you provide on your resume, so just missing a required piece.

The second question that I get asked the most is how to actually tailor the resume. So, in order to get in that highest qualified category, you really have to demonstrate all those skills and abilities that they're looking for, and if you leave one off, you think, you know, well of course I have that job, I've worked as a nurse for five or 10 years. They're not able to assume that you have certain skills, so just to make sure that you really use that job announcement to your advantage and look at all those specialized skills and abilities that they're looking for so you can demonstrate those on your resume.

And similar to and connected to that is also the occupational questionnaire, how you label yourself. If you label yourself as an expert in different areas on the occupational questionnaire, you have to make sure that you back that up on your federal resume to make sure that your experience matches and it's very consistent for you.
Mininia: OK. Thank you very much, Kristina. We have another question that says I’m a Key Spouse. Can we use our previous commanders for the resources, and also this is another great question, how many years on the resume should we go back?

Kristina: I didn’t quite catch maybe the first question but I can go ahead and answer the how many years should you should go back. So, usually we recommend maybe going back about 10 years on your resume, especially you want to make sure that you include that relevant experience. Sometimes if I’m working with the military spouse that maybe is a retired veteran maybe they have about 20 years of experience that they feel is very relevant to the position, and so at times you know you could go back a little bit further. You just want to make sure the most relevant information is included and maybe some of those positions from you know five or 10 years ago, or even if you do want to include maybe 15 years ago, you just include you know short statements about what you did there that you think would be most helpful to you. So, you really want to have as much information as much as that’s relevant and recent as possible if you can.

Mininia: OK. Thank you very much, Kristina. There are several questions about NAF versus GS. Would you like to answer those?

Kristina: I guess, OK, my biggest question Mininia, and again, usually what we would do with a spouse is we would follow up with them during a consultation and try to get to know a little bit more information about what they’re looking for. Because some of the NAF positions have also moved to USAJOBS.

Many of those NAF positions are again, traditionally have been on base, so through your military installation you can get connected to a lot of those different positions. So, during a consultation what we would usually do, you know with the military spouses, we would get to know a little bit more about your background and the different types of positions that you would be interested in. That, as we talked about, there’s hundreds of agencies and organizations through the federal government and through positions on base as well, through the commissary, and additional places if there’s a clinic on base. So, there’s such a wide range of options and every installation is a little different, especially if you’re in the United States or if you’re overseas I know we have a few military spouses joining from overseas as well. So we would probably get very specific to what you’re looking for and then also what’s available in your location at your specific duty station to help you go about that application process properly.

Mininia: OK, thank you Christina. Some of the other questions that we have, there are several questions about the GS levels and moving between the GS levels. Can you kind of talk about how the GS system works?

Kristina: The GS level, again, there are a lot of factors that come into play. Of course your education and your experience as well, so a lot of times when we’re analyzing what level would be the best for you, just to kind of give you a general answer especially in reference to qualifications, there are federal positions out there that
require high school diploma and no experience. Usually those levels are around the GS-2 level. If you have a bachelor's degree, typically again if you are entering in based on education qualifications, that would be a GS-5. And then a GS-9 or above usually would require a master's degree. A lot of times when you look at the job announcement and you're looking at qualifying for a certain position, they do count your experience as well as your education so you could qualify based on education alone. You could qualify on experience alone, or you may have some combination of the two. A lot of times they will be able to calculate your education and your experience. You have to get that score of 100 or higher in order to be qualified for that specific GS level and to be qualified for that position.

**Mininia:** OK. I think we have time for one more question. Can you talk a little bit about what a spouse can expect if they call into the SECO Career Center and they want to speak with a SECO career coach about the federal resume package? What can they expect on that journey?

**Kristina:** Yes. With the federal employment process, as we talked about, it's very competitive and there are quite a few steps. I know we went to nine different steps today and so we would really be able to meet you exactly where you are. So, if you have a federal resume, you have a job announcement that's closing in a few days and you really want us to review that and tailor that to a specific job posting, we can help you with that.

If you're brand new to the federal employment process and you just want to get to know a little bit more about what to expect and what's available on USAJOBS and how to go about that, we can help you with that as well. So, usually we would have an initial consultation where we would really dive into your story, get to know you, your background, any challenges that you might be facing, and also the goals that you have. And then from there we would tailor every consultation to you, that we can help you with the very next step, and we would just build upon that with each consultation to help you throughout the entire process.

**Mininia:** Thank you very much, Kristina. This has been a very informative session. There have been so many questions, so much communication about what everyone has learned today, and of course the conversation doesn't have to end here. If you have specific questions that you would like answered or you would like to set up an opportunity to speak with a SECO career coach, you can call 1-800-342-9647. And there are some coaches that are still answering questions in the chat pod.

So, to download the available handouts from this session, including the presentation slides and our SECO program flyer that discusses the resources and services available to military spouses, please highlight the document and click the Download Files button. The items will download to your computer in a compressed file. If you are connecting with a mobile device and are unable to download the files successfully, you may enter your email address into the Trouble with Downloads chat table to receive the materials after the event. If you have trouble please let us know in the Need Technical Assistance chat pod.
In the Weblink pod, you will find two links. The first link is for the session survey and please provide your feedback on today's experience. The second link is where you can download your certificate of participation.

So again, this concludes today's presentation and please join us at 3 p.m. for a Facebook Live event with MSEP partner Starbucks, who will talk about some of the leadership roles and some of the employment opportunities that they have available within their company. And also, if you haven't already registered for tomorrow's sessions, it's not too late. And for those who have already registered, we certainly look forward to seeing you tomorrow. We hope that each of you has taken away or learned something from one of the sessions today that you did not know or was not aware about, and that you of course reach out to some of our SECO career coaches to set up appointments.

And again, if you have not registered, you still have the opportunity to do so. And if you have, we look forward to seeing you tomorrow, but before tomorrow, we will see you at 3 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on our Facebook Live page at facebook.com/dodmilspouse, where we will feature our MSEP partner Starbucks. Thank you and have a wonderful day.