

UNDERSTANDING JOB SERIES AND THE GENERAL SCHEDULE (GS) PAY SCALE

This resource was created by current Presidential Management Fellows (PMFs) 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 the topic.

The General Schedule (GS) is the Federal Government’s most common position classification system. 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 (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 and accounts for approximately a quarter of Classes of 2017-2020 postings. The other Occupation Groups and Job Series that appear in a given year’s job announcements will depend on the agencies’ needs. Some of the common ones found in the analysis of 2017-2020 postings include:

- 0100 - Social Science, Psychology, and Welfare Group. Specifically series 0101 (Social Scientist) and 0130 (Foreign Affairs).
- 0300 - General Administrative, Clerical, and Office Services Group. Specifically series 0301 (Miscellaneous) and 0343 (Program Analyst).
- 0400 - Natural Resources Management and Biological Sciences Group. Specifically 0401 (General Natural Resources and Biologist).
- 0500 - Accounting and Budget Group. Specifically 0560 (Budget Analyst).
- 0600 - Medical, Hospital, Dental, and Public Health Group. Specifically 0685 (Public Health Program Specialist).

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.

Every year OPM [publishes](#) a new set of Salary Tables in line with approved budget, which may include an increase to the base pay reflecting inflation. 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 much more. To view the tables for 2020, go to the OPM website at:

<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/>. The website will default to the current calendar year.

Below is the base GS Salary Table for 2020. The Base table covers the general salaries not identified geographically and serves as a default.

**SALARY TABLE 2020-GS
INCORPORATING THE 2.6% GENERAL SCHEDULE INCREASE
EFFECTIVE JANUARY 2020**

Annual Rates by Grade and Step

Grade	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7	Step 8	Step 9	Step 10	WITHIN GRADE AMOUNTS
1	\$ 19,543	\$ 20,198	\$ 20,848	\$ 21,494	\$ 22,144	\$ 22,524	\$ 23,166	\$ 23,814	\$ 23,840	\$ 24,448	VARIABLES
2	21,974	22,497	23,225	23,840	24,108	24,817	25,526	26,235	26,944	27,653	VARIABLES
3	23,976	24,775	25,574	26,373	27,172	27,971	28,770	29,569	30,368	31,167	799
4	26,915	27,812	28,709	29,606	30,503	31,400	32,297	33,194	34,091	34,988	897
5	30,113	31,117	32,121	33,125	34,129	35,133	36,137	37,141	38,145	39,149	1,004
6	33,567	34,686	35,805	36,924	38,043	39,162	40,281	41,400	42,519	43,638	1,119
7	37,301	38,544	39,787	41,030	42,273	43,516	44,759	46,002	47,245	48,488	1,243
8	41,310	42,687	44,064	45,441	46,818	48,195	49,572	50,949	52,326	53,703	1,377
9	45,627	47,148	48,669	50,190	51,711	53,232	54,753	56,274	57,795	59,316	1,521
10	50,246	51,921	53,596	55,271	56,946	58,621	60,296	61,971	63,646	65,321	1,675
11	55,204	57,044	58,884	60,724	62,564	64,404	66,244	68,084	69,924	71,764	1,840
12	66,167	68,373	70,579	72,785	74,991	77,197	79,403	81,609	83,815	86,021	2,206
13	78,681	81,304	83,927	86,550	89,173	91,796	94,419	97,042	99,665	102,288	2,623
14	92,977	96,076	99,175	102,274	105,373	108,472	111,571	114,670	117,769	120,868	3,099
15	109,366	113,012	116,658	120,304	123,950	127,596	131,242	134,888	138,534	142,180	3,646

Below is the 2020 GS Salary Table for the “WASHINGTON-BALTIMORE-ARLINGTON, DC-MD-VA-WV-PA” geographic area, which accounts for more than half the 2017-2020 PMF job announcements:

**SALARY TABLE 2020-DCB
INCORPORATING THE 2.6% GENERAL SCHEDULE INCREASE AND A LOCALITY PAYMENT OF 30.48%
FOR THE LOCALITY PAY AREA OF WASHINGTON-BALTIMORE-ARLINGTON, DC-MD-VA-WV-PA
TOTAL INCREASE: 3.52%
EFFECTIVE JANUARY 2020**

Annual Rates by Grade and Step

Grade	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7	Step 8	Step 9	Step 10
1	\$ 25,500	\$ 26,354	\$ 27,202	\$ 28,045	\$ 28,893	\$ 29,389	\$ 30,227	\$ 31,073	\$ 31,106	\$ 31,900
2	28,672	29,354	30,304	31,106	31,456	32,381	33,306	34,231	35,157	36,082
3	31,284	32,326	33,369	34,411	35,454	36,497	37,539	38,582	39,624	40,667
4	35,119	36,289	37,460	38,630	39,800	40,971	42,141	43,312	44,482	45,652
5	39,291	40,601	41,911	43,222	44,532	45,842	47,152	48,462	49,772	51,082
6	43,798	45,258	46,718	48,178	49,639	51,099	52,559	54,019	55,479	56,939
7	48,670	50,292	51,914	53,536	55,158	56,780	58,402	60,023	61,645	63,267
8	53,901	55,698	57,495	59,291	61,088	62,885	64,682	66,478	68,275	70,072
9	59,534	61,519	63,503	65,488	67,473	69,457	71,442	73,426	75,411	77,396
10	65,561	67,747	69,932	72,118	74,303	76,489	78,674	80,860	83,045	85,231
11	72,030	74,431	76,832	79,233	81,634	84,034	86,435	88,836	91,237	93,638
12	86,335	89,213	92,091	94,970	97,848	100,727	103,605	106,483	109,362	112,240
13	102,663	106,085	109,508	112,930	116,353	119,775	123,198	126,620	130,043	133,465
14	121,316	125,360	129,404	133,447	137,491	141,534	145,578	149,621	153,665	157,709
15	142,701	147,458	152,215	156,973	161,730	166,487	170,800 *	170,800 *	170,800 *	170,800 *

Grades 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 and the position covers multiple grade levels. Finalists can only be initially appointed to the GS-9/11/12 (or equivalent) and 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 PhD (e.g., master’s or professional degrees).
- **GS-10:** Exists but is used infrequently. See the following [Federal Times article](https://www.federaltimes.com/management/hr/2020/07/01/why-there-are-so-few-gs-10-positions-in-government/) 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 PMFs holding PhDs (e.g., doctorates) are generally hired at, when they have no additional specialized experience. After one year at the GS-9 grade level, PMFs are generally minimally eligible for promotion to a GS-11.
- **GS-12:** This is the rate that advanced PMFs are generally hired at. Outside of the Washington, DC metro area, a GS-12 can be the full performance level for many non-supervisory positions. After one year at the GS-11 grade level, PMFs are generally minimally eligible for promotion to GS-12.
- **GS-13:** In the Washington, DC metro area, a GS-13 can be the full performance level for many non-supervisory positions. After one year at the GS-12 grade level, PMFs are generally minimally eligible for promotion to a GS-13.
- **GS-14:** This is the grade generally reserved for highly specialized and valued non-supervisory positions, as well as more junior supervisory positions.
- **GS-15:** This is the highest grade available for Federal employees, typically reserved for supervisors or managers, and extremely specialized and valued non-supervisory positions. 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.

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 potentially qualify you for higher salary grades. 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 job announcement. A Fellow 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.