

Become an APHIS Foreign Service Officer



Want to make a difference for American agriculture? We need animal and plant health experts to work for APHIS overseas.

The Foreign Service Officer Selection Process

Submit Your Application

When you are ready to apply for a Foreign Service Officer position, the next step is to refer to the specific vacancy announcement and complete all required procedures. A complete application package contains all the material listed in the announcement. APHIS will not consider an application that does not meet the basic eligibility requirements for employment in the Foreign Service.

You must submit your application through www.USAJOB.S.gov. Please visit APHIS' [Careers](#) site to explore career fields and subscribe to the mailing list.

Attend the APHIS Assessment Center

APHIS will invite qualified candidates to Washington, D.C. at their own expense to participate in the APHIS Assessment Center.

Trained examiners will evaluate you against specific competencies. You will be asked to read and sign the following forms pertaining to attending the APHIS Assessment Center and conditions of employment in the Foreign Service. If you are not willing to abide by these conditions, you should not schedule an appointment to attend the APHIS Assessment Center should you receive an invitation.

- [Acceptance of the Conditions of Foreign Service Employment](#) (71.19 KB)
- [Non-Disclosure Form](#)

Medical Clearance

All candidates must receive medical clearance to be hired and serve abroad.

The State Department's Office of Medical Services determines a candidate's medical fitness and ability to serve overseas. Many Foreign Service posts are in remote areas with extremely limited medical support. Each candidate must meet rigorous medical standards to qualify for worldwide medical clearance. Medical Services determines medical clearance based on its thorough review of each candidate's medical history and physical examination, including an individual assessment of his/her specific medical needs and the medical capabilities of Foreign Service posts to meet those needs.

After extending a tentative offer of employment, APHIS will provide each candidate with the necessary examination forms (including instructions) to give to the examining health care practitioner (Doctor of Medicine - MD, Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine - DO, Nurse Practitioner - NP, Physician Assistant - PA). We also provide an authorization for the State Department to pay for the examination. Candidates who live within 50 miles of Washington, DC, must schedule their medical exams at the State Department's Office of Medical Services. Those who live more than 50 miles from Washington, DC, may have their own physician do the exam or have it done at the State Department.

Regardless of who administers the medical clearance exam, the State Department's Office of Medical Services determines whether a candidate is medically eligible for assignment to all Foreign Service posts worldwide. While a candidate may effectively manage a chronic health condition or limitation within the United States or in specific areas outside of the U.S., the Office of Medical Services might determine that the same individual is not eligible for a worldwide medical clearance. Such clearances may only be issued to candidates whom the Office of Medical Services deems able to serve at the most isolated and medically restricted overseas posts.

Isolated and medically restricted overseas posts may have limitations on reliable air service in and out of the country, unreliable internet and telecommunications connections, and/or unreliable postal and delivery systems. Any of these limited services can have a severe adverse impact in terms of both bringing in needed medical services and/or supplies and/or permitting timely medical evacuations. Other infrastructures at such a post might also be inadequate. There may be a poor or negligible public health system, poor sanitation, unreliable electricity, and a lack of potable water. There may also be infectious and communicable diseases. Medically restricted posts may have no health unit or local medical facility. The emergency room, for example, may be completely inadequate, without ventilators, defibrillators, x-ray capabilities, etc. Posts like these often lack access to blood banks, medical supplies, or readily available medications. Due to political instability, security could be a concern.

Candidates should be aware that there are many of these posts, and they are not confined to a specific geographic region. Also, there are numerous posts — in Asia and Europe for example — where conditions appear like that of the U.S., but which also feature some of these restrictive characteristics. As a result, the stress level among employees at these posts might be very high. Given these concerns, APHIS will only assign employees with unrestricted medical clearances to such posts and is unable to hire new employees without such clearances.

While the candidate must be medically cleared for worldwide service, APHIS does not consider the medical condition of eligible family members for employment purposes. APHIS does, however, require that each eligible family member have a medical clearance before they travel overseas at U.S. Government expense when accompanying an employee on assignment. Children under the age of six must be seen by their own pediatrician, regardless of location.

Please note that employees may be assigned to posts where a family member who has been issued a limited medical clearance (not worldwide) cannot accompany them. We strongly recommend that candidates consider this situation as they pursue employment with APHIS.

On request, the Director General of the Foreign Service, or designee, may waive the worldwide availability requirement for a candidate who is unable to qualify for a worldwide medical clearance. Candidates should be aware, however, that the granting of such waivers is rare.

For more information on medical clearances, please see the State Department's [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Security Clearance

All candidates must receive security clearance to be hired and serve abroad.

APHIS will initiate the security clearance process for candidates who pass the APHIS Assessment and receive a tentative offer. A comprehensive background investigation, conducted by the State Department's Office of Personnel Security in cooperation with other federal, state, and local agencies, will provide the information necessary to determine a candidate's suitability for appointment to the Foreign Service and for a Top-Secret security clearance. The process considers such factors as: failure to repay a U.S. Government-guaranteed loan or meet tax obligations, failure to register for the Selective Service, past problems with credit or bankruptcy, unsatisfactory employment records, a criminal record or other violations of the law, drug or alcohol abuse, and less than honorable discharge from the armed forces.

Candidates who hold dual citizenship, have had extensive travel, education, residence and/or employment overseas, or who have foreign contacts, a foreign-born spouse, immediate family members or relatives who are not citizens of the United States, should be aware that the clearance process will take longer to complete. The background investigation includes interviews with current and previous contacts, supervisors, and coworkers. Potential candidates who have any serious issues that may prevent them from receiving a clearance should give some thought to the likelihood of their being found ineligible before starting this process. Candidates who do not receive a security clearance are ineligible for appointment.

Attaining U.S. foreign policy objectives depends substantially on the confidence of the public (both American and foreign) in the individuals selected to serve in the Foreign Service. APHIS, therefore, requires the highest conduct standards by Foreign Service employees, including an especially high degree of integrity, reliability, and prudence. Given the representational nature of employment in the Foreign Service, employees must always observe proper standards.

In evaluating suitability, APHIS takes into consideration the following factors:

- Misconduct in prior employment, including marginal performance or inability to interact effectively with others
- Criminal, dishonest, or disgraceful conduct
- Misrepresentation, including deception or fraud, in the application process
- Repeated or habitual excessive use of intoxicating beverages affecting the employee's ability to perform the duties and responsibilities of the position
- Trafficking in or abuse of narcotics or controlled substances
- Reasonable doubt as to loyalty to the U.S. Government
- Conduct that clearly shows poor judgment and or lack of discretion which may reasonably affect an individual or the agency's ability to carry out its responsibilities or mission
- Financial irresponsibility, including a history of not meeting financial obligations or an inability to satisfy debt

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Other Things To Consider

Language Training

A foreign language is preferred, but not required to become a Foreign Service Officer Trainee. We will provide foreign language training to candidates. While in the Foreign Service training program, you will learn to speak, read, and write a foreign language. To become a career Foreign Service Officer, you must be able to pass a speaking, reading, and writing language proficiency exam.

Candidates with Disabilities

APHIS' Office of Reasonable Accommodations will determine reasonable accommodations for qualified candidates who will require accommodation upon appointment. To qualify, a candidate must meet all requirements for appointment to the Foreign Service.

Commitment to Foreign Service Work

Anyone applying to be in the Foreign Service must be willing to accept the following commitments of Foreign Service work:

- Flexibility in assignments,
- Public support of U.S. Government policies,
- Worldwide availability,
- Costs, and
- Medical/Security Clearances.

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