Public Sector Foundational Knowledge

What is the Public Sector?

When you hear 'public sector' what types of careers come to mind? Many people think of working in government, nonprofit services, or teaching at a public school. All of these and many more are correct! The public sector is composed of the nonprofit, government, and NGO sectors. The industry offers an incredible array of meaningful career paths to advance the public good and such as being a:

- Teacher
- Civil Rights Advocate
- Environmental Activist
- Government Analyst
- Community Organizer
- Administrative Assistant in an NGO
- Associate at a community based organization
- Research analyst at a think tank
- And many, many other roles!

What's in the guide?

This industry guide provides an explanation & overview of the public sector, how to go about finding public sector jobs, internships, and other opportunities, recruiting timelines, and resume, cover letter, and interview tips.

Opportunities and Resources specifically at Pitzer

- CASA Pitzer
    - The Critical Action & Social Advocacy (CASA) Program at Pitzer is a wonderful opportunity to build community and enact change. The CASA Pitzer academic program facilitates student internships and community-based participatory research on issues of regional equity and justice pertaining to incarceration, immigration, education, environment, labor, art, culture, and health.
- Pitzer Community Engagement Center
    - The Pitzer CEC is a wonderful on-campus resource that supports many types of student social justice work. The office maintains databases of opportunities, provides various types of funding for community engagement projects and

resources, and hosts various awards/fellowships for exceptional work and projects.

- Resources:
    - From [the CEC Homepage](), you can easily navigate to the CEC's funding requests, extensive list of volunteering opportunities, and their fellowship opportunities
    - [This is a database of social justice organizations]() that frequently have internship, job, and fellowship opportunities
    - [This database of local volunteerships]() is updated frequently and currently includes many opportunities english tutoring and local political advocacy
- Career Services
    - The Career Services Office offers support during any step of your public service journey, from discerning your interests and passions to tightening up a resume and contract negotiation.
    - The office also maintains the **Pitzer Professional Directory**, which is a searchable database of Pitzer alumni and family. You can search the Directory based on a number of criteria, including industry, profession, geography, Pitzer major, and organization name. Only alumni and parents/family members with active email addresses and organization names appear in the Directory. This can be a powerful tool to identify individuals who are working in industries of interest for informational interviewing and career guidance. Seniors and juniors automatically have access to PPD through the student portal; freshman and sophomores can request access through a brief meeting with a Career Services staff member.

Where to Find Opportunities in Public Service

Public sector recruiting is relatively decentralized because the industry's composition of various focused and sized nonprofits and government agencies is decentralized. But not to worry! Decentralization does not entail impossibility or even overly difficult. Many resources exist that make the public sector opportunity search easier. These include:
- Idealist.org
    - Idealist is a searchable database of job, internship, volunteer, and fellowship openings that serves about 120,000 publicly oriented organizations. It is the largest database of professional opportunities within the public sector. You can search by position type (job, internship, volunteer opportunities, fellowship, etc), keywords, skills, interests, location, level (entry, mid-career, senior), and type of

work. Many nonprofits of all sizes, focuses, and locations publicize their postings on the platform.

- Professor John Pitney at Claremont McKenna College maintains an [excellent database of public sector organizations across a wide swath of interest and focus areas](). While the database does not directly provide information about current openings, it was designed to support students in the internship and/or job search. It's a wonderful list of mostly DC and nationally oriented advocacy organizations, nonprofits, think tanks, and government agencies. This can be helpful for learning what's out there or focusing your opportunity search.

- Linkedin
    - Linkedin is a powerful social networking platform. Often, organizations will post opening notices and jobs on Linkedin because of its ubiquity and far reach. However, its best use is for making connections, which is addressed in the next section.

- Tom Manatos Jobs
    - A must-use job posting list for DC area government and political opportunities, Tom Manatos Jobs compiles postings from a wide array of sources and focuses into a few different categories (ie internship, full-time, government, NGO) that are easy to read. While the service is subscription based, contact the Pitzer Career Services Office for more information on obtaining login information.
- Handshake
    - Handshake is a platform specifically designed for higher education. This means that any opportunities you come across on the platform were posted not only with college students in mind, but Pitzer and 5C students specifically!
- Government Jobs only: https://www.usajobs.gov/ and https://gogovernment.org/

- Relationships!
    - A recent study found that 80% of jobs are filled through personal and professional connections. In essence, relationships are incredibly important! Don't be afraid to message a Pitzer alum (or someone you have worked with, or someone who just seems really interesting) on Linkedin to request an informational interview or career guidance. Career Services can provide assistance with this process; generally, for example, it's not a great idea to directly ask for a job unless you have a very close preexisting relationship with a person.

Where to find people to talk to who work in public service (ie making connections)

- Linkedin is great for learning about job postings; it is even better for learning about people working in organizations or issue-areas you are interested in learning more about. Creating a strong network of connections will allow you to:
    - Learn about new opportunities that your connections post about (most likely because they have some sort of relationship with the job posting)
    - Have a wide array of connections to reach out to for a coffee chat about their experiences!
- Pitzer Pitzer Professional Directory
    - As mentioned before, this directory is a database of all alums and families with current email addresses.

What is the recruitment process like in Public Service?

For any position, you will generally need to include a resume and cover letter, and sometimes a writing sample, reference list, or other supporting documents. Once you submit your application, you may be contacted to interview. After interviewing, you will then be informed of the decision of either offer or deny. This can occur between 1 day and 1 month after your interview.

Internships:
Summer internship positions are generally posted between December and April. Some positions are rolling, and others have deadlines (generally) between January and April. The timing is specific to each position or organization; generally smaller organizations tend to recruit later in the cycle, but this is not always the case. If a position you are interested in is rolling, you should strive to apply as soon as possible while still submitting your strongest application. It's also important to look at the original listing date of rolling positions, as this will give you an idea of if it is worth your time to apply. Generally, a rolling position posted 3+ months ago will likely have already been filled.

Jobs:
Full-time public service jobs are often posted on an as needed basis. This means that when an organization or government office has a vacancy and needs to fill out, the hiring manager will (most likely) be looking to fill the role as soon as possible. This is not a tried and true rule (some organizations post jobs in March targeted towards recent grads with September start dates, for example), but it is highly common for both nonprofit and government full time roles. Regardless, the general recruiting cycle runs from January of your last year until whenever roles are filled!

Fellowships:

Fellowship applications are usually due in the fall or winter, and the post-application process is often months long. Fulbright, for example, is due in September, notifies applicants about semifinalist status in January, and notifies semifinalists if they receive the award in March-May. The application process is generally more extensive than for jobs and almost always involves multiple essays and letters of recommendation. Many other fellowship applications are less extreme in their time frame, but still quite long. The upside to this process is that Fellowships offer a fixed starting date (often in August or September of the next year) and a fixed application deadline. If you apply by the deadline, your application will be considered.

What does a good resume look like for Public Service roles?

Your resume is a critical part of any application. It showcases your past experience, and is an opportunity to frame your skills and qualifications for the position you are applying to. Your bullet points for each experience should start with a strong action verb; it's often a great idea to incorporate the verbiage from job postings into your resume bullet points!

General Guidelines

- 1-page single space document
- Sections:
  - Header with contact info/ name at top
    - First & last name (should be the one thing that stands out)
    - City & State, Phone Number & Email
    - LinkedIn (optional)
    - GPA if above 3.4
  - Education
    - Name of institution(s); can also include abroad experience
    - Include intended major & minor
    - EXTRAS: Awards & honors; related coursework; GPA if 3.5 or higher
  - Experience
    - Features most relevant experiences first (ie reverse chronological order)
    - Includes: position title, company name, dates when worked & location
    - (Action verb + Tasks) + Result = Accomplishment Statement
    - Uses bullet points
    - Quantify where possible
  - Leadership/ Activities (optional, but recommended)
    - Include volunteer, extracurricular, or other non-work experience
    - Again, (Action verb + Tasks) + Result = Accomplishment Statement
    - Include soft skills (people skills, social skills, communication skills, etc.)
  - Skills (optional, but recommended especially for technical/quantitative skills)
    - List software programs and hardware with which you are proficient
    - Languages: include level of proficiency (e.g., native, fluent, proficient)
    - Technical Equipment: list for media, lab, and science positions

- Social Media is big nowadays, include if you have used platforms professionally
- Font:
  - Uses APA style fonts that are easy to read: Times, Cambria, Calibri, Arial
  - Font is no smaller than 10 pt and usually no larger than 12 pt for items
  - Text is black on white backdrop (no color design, blocks, etc unless Graphic Design interest)

Examples:
- 📄 Sample Public Service Resume.pdf
- [Middlebury College Sample Public Service Resume](#)
- [Harvard Resume/Cover Letter Guide](#)

What does a good cover letter look like for Public Service roles?

In public service applications, cover letters are often more important than resumes. They are your chance to show who you are, what you care about, and what you bring to a role (not to mention your writing skills). In your cover letter, you should convey how their convictions align with their past professional or personal experiences, how such deeply held values and past experiences connect to the organization being applied to, and how those values will connect to the specific work expectations of the applied role.

General Guidelines

- 1-page document (although margins, text size, spacing, & font can all be adjusted to create more space)
- Header with your contact info/name at top and the date
- Formal salutation to the recipient--ie person(s) listed on the job posting, if any
  - Dear Hiring Managers, To Mx. XXX, etc
- Paragraphs:
  - Paragraph #1: Introduction (this should be both an intro and a skeleton outline of the rest of your cover letter)
    - State you are applying to (how you learned about the position is optional to include)
    - Briefly describe why you are interested, why you are qualified, and what you bring to the position. Try and integrate all of this together in a few sentences, and try to integrate these ideas throughout the entire cover letter.
  - Paragraph #2: Your personal why statement
    - This is especially important for the public sector and should include:
      - Why are you passionate about the mission of the organization and/or the responsibilities of the position? How does this tie into who you are/your identity?
  - Paragraph #3: Past experience #1
    - Describe in vivid detail a past professional, academic, or personal experience that connects to what you are applying.
    - Highlight relevant skills (can be taken from the job posting) and what you

accomplished utilizing those skills.
- Paragraph #4: Past experience #2
  - Same as paragraph #3 but for a different past/current experience
- Paragraph #5: Synthesize your past experiences and connect them to the role that you applied for. Looking up recent projects of the team or organization you are applying to and connecting them to what you care about and your experience is a great way to do this!

Further Resources & Information

Job Search and General Public Service
- [Harvard College Nonprofit Job Search Guide](#)
- [Yale University Post-Graduate Public Service & Social Justice Fellowships Database](#)
- [Butler University Nonprofits, NGO's, and Social Enterprises Industry Guide](#)

Public Policy & Government
- [Williams College Government & Public Policy Industry Guide](#)
- [Butler University Government & Public Policy Industry Guide](#)

Environmental
- [Williams College Environment and Sustainability Guide](#)
- [Butler University Environmental Studies/Sciences Industry Guide](#)