



National Partnership Office, Workforce Development Partnerships Service Hub

Public Lands Corps Resource Guide *for Participants*

Purpose: Ensure Public Lands Corps participants have a clear understanding of the PLC eligibility requirements, how to request a PLC certificate, and how to use their PLC certificate to apply for permanent federal positions.

Public Lands Corps Background

Public Lands Corps (PLC) is a work and education program established by the Public Lands Corps Act of 1993. Through PLC partnerships, young adults and veterans contribute to the conservation, restoration, and rehabilitation of public lands while gaining paid work experience and job training in a variety of resource management fields. After 640 hours of service under an eligible PLC agreement, participants earn a 2-year non-competitive hiring authority.

Indian Youth Service Corps (IYSC) was established in 2019 via an amendment to the Public Lands Corps Act. IYSC mirrors PLC requirements and benefits, with a focus on engaging Indian young adults through partnerships with Tribes and Indigenous communities.

Eligibility Requirements

- Age: Participants must be aged 16-30 (inclusive) and veterans up to age 35
- Citizenship: Participants must be U.S. citizens, nationals, or permanent residents
- Education: Participants must have received their high school diploma or equivalent

Benefits

- Complete 640 hours of project work under an eligible agreement to earn a 2-year non-competitive hiring authority
- Living stipend, allowance, or wage
 - Some positions may also offer an AmeriCorps Education Award upon successful term completion
- Gain direct experience and training in a variety of natural and cultural resource management career fields
- Work alongside Forest Service staff to conduct priority land management projects
- Develop technical, interpersonal, and applicable job skills

Project Type Examples

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trail maintenance and construction • Wildfire risk mitigation, fuels reduction, and prescribed burning • Wildlife habitat restoration • Reforestation, tree planting, and seed collection • Invasive species management • Climate change monitoring and mitigation • Rehabilitation and maintenance of facilities and campgrounds | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preservation of historic structures and cultural resources • Conservation education and visitor services • Public affairs, communications, and digital media • Legislative affairs and policy assessment • Forestry products laboratory research • National Environmental Policy Act projects • Mapping and geographic information systems, and more |
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PLC Frequently Asked Questions

How do I know if I'm eligible for the PLC hiring authority? How do I request it?

If you complete 640 hours of appropriate conservation projects¹ on eligible service lands², including 120 hours of on National Forest System lands or Indian lands, you may be eligible to earn your PLC hiring authority through the U.S. Forest Service.

You must have been 16-30 years old during your term (or up to 35 years old, if you are a veteran). You must be a U.S. citizen, national, or permanent resident, and you must have received your high school diploma or GED.

Let the organization you are employed by (e.g., conservation corps, non-profit organization, college or university) know that you are interested in receiving your PLC certificate of eligibility for non-competitive hiring authority upon completion of your term or internship. They can assist you in completing a [PLC Verification Form](#) and submitting this form to the U.S. Forest Service. If you meet all of the eligibility requirements, the U.S. Forest Service will issue you a signed PLC certificate that you may use to apply for permanent federal positions.

Can I combine my hours across multiple organizations to reach 640 hours?

Yes! Please complete a separate PLC verification form for each organization you worked with and submit them to the U.S. Forest Service.

Example: You worked 160 hours on a trail crew through Student Conservation Association in Glacier National Park two summers ago and another 480 hours on a vegetation management crew through Montana Conservation Corps on the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest this past summer. You would complete two PLC verification forms, one for each organization. You would work with staff at each organization to confirm that your conservation projects are eligible for PLC, get the forms signed, and have the organization you worked with when you worked on National Forest System lands (in this case, Montana Conservation Corps) submit **both** PLC verification forms to the U.S. Forest Service. Ensure that you are still under the age of 30 (or age 35 if you a veteran) when you are requesting your certificate.

What is the PLC hiring authority?

The PLC non-competitive hiring authority allows you to apply for permanent positions with the U.S. Forest Service. If your PLC certificate was issued by the U.S. Forest Service, you may also use it to apply for permanent positions with Department of Interior agencies, such as the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and U.S. Geological Survey, as well as National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) under Department of Commerce.

¹ Any project for the conservation, restoration, construction or rehabilitation of natural, cultural, historic, archaeological, recreational, or scenic resources

² Federal, state, county, or other public lands; Indian lands; Hawaiian homelands

How does it benefit me to use my PLC hiring authority to apply for positions?

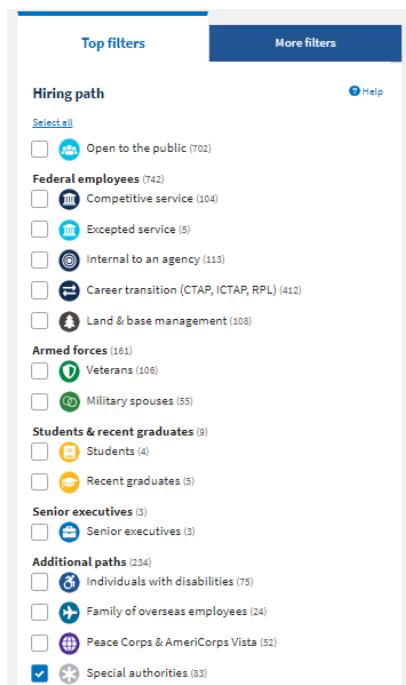
It's worth noting that federal jobs can be permanent, term, or temporary-seasonal. Some permanent year-round federal jobs are open to the public, but many are limited to current and former employees or applicants with "special hiring authorities." With the PLC hiring authority, you become eligible to apply for permanent federal jobs that are open to current and former federal employees and those with special hiring authorities. These positions are generally closed to the general public, so you have the benefit of being able to apply for desirable permanent positions for which you would not otherwise be eligible. In addition, you have the advantage of competing for these positions with a smaller pool of eligible applicants.

How long do I have to use my PLC certificate?

You must be onboarded into your position within 2 years of when your PLC certificate was signed and before your 33rd birthday (or 38th birthday if you are a veteran). Because the federal application and selection process can take several months, it is highly recommended that you begin searching and applying for positions well before your certificate is set to expire.

How to Use Your PLC Hiring Authority When Applying for Jobs

1. Go to <https://usajobs.gov>.
2. Identify the jobs you're eligible to apply for by filtering by Hiring Path and selecting "Special Authorities"³.



³ You may be eligible for other hiring authorities beyond Public Lands Corps (for example, there are hiring authorities for veterans, persons with disabilities, students, and recent graduates). Click [here](#) to learn more. You are eligible to apply for positions "Open to the Public" by default.

3. Identify the jobs you're interested in applying for by filtering by Department and Agency. For example, you can select "Department of Agriculture" to view U.S. Forest Service jobs or "Department of Interior" to view National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Bureau of Indian Affairs jobs. You can also search by key terms and location.



4. When you find a position that you want to apply for, read the job announcement thoroughly, paying particular attention to the "Requirements" and "How You Will Be Evaluated" sections.
5. Prepare your application package. For each position you apply to, your qualifications for the position will be evaluated based upon your application's (1) attachments and (2) responses to the assessment questionnaire.
6. Your attachments should include all required documents per the job announcement.
 - a. Signed PLC certificate (Certificate of Eligibility for Noncompetitive Hiring Status)
 - b. High school diploma or GED
 - c. Resume
 - d. Post-secondary, college, or graduate school transcripts if using education to qualify
7. Within your resume, clearly document all relevant prior experience including paid work experience, internships, and volunteer service. Each block of experience should include:
 - a. Dates of employment. Include start and end day, month, and year
 - b. Hours worked per week
 - c. Position title
 - d. Series and grade, if the position was with a federal agency
 - e. Description of duties performed. Make sure to clearly show how your prior experience relates to the duties of the position you are applying for. It is highly recommended that you use language that mirrors the language of the job announcement. The Human Resources Specialists reviewing your resume may not be subject matter experts in your field, so they may not be able to discern how your experience relates to the job qualifications if not explicitly stated
 - f. Supervisor contact information and whether or not they may be contacted for a reference check

8. When completing the assessment questionnaire, respond “Yes” to the following question: “Have you completed a qualifying conservation project(s) with the U.S. Forest Service and received a Public Lands Corps Certificate of Eligibility for Noncompetitive Hiring Status?”

*9. Have you completed a qualifying conservation project(s) with the US Forest Service? If yes, confirm that you meet the following:

- you received a Public Land Corps - Certificate of Eligibility for Noncompetitive Hiring Status
- you were between 16 and 30 years old (inclusive) when the certification of eligibility was signed
- you completed a minimum of 640 hours of satisfactory service on appropriate conservation projects that included at least 120 hours on Public Lands Corps projects; **AND,**
- you are within the two-year eligibility period from the date the certification was signed.

- A. Yes
 B. No

9. When completing the assessment questionnaire, you will be asked to select your level of competency with the knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with the position. Be honest with your responses but if you find yourself in between responses, select the response that reflects the higher level of competency. A Human Resources Specialist will verify your responses against your resume to confirm that your experience and educational background qualify you for the position.
10. When completing the assessment questionnaire, if there are multiple locations available, you may be asked to select which locations you are interested in. Select all locations where you would be willing to consider working.
11. If the job announcement includes the contact information of the hiring manager, you can reach out to them directly to ask a question about the position and let them know of your interest. Establishing a personal connection goes a long way!

Am I Eligible for Other Hiring Authorities and Position Types?

(Direct Hire Authority, Student Trainee, Recent Graduates Positions)

Student Trainee Positions (Internships)

Who can apply: Students who have been accepted for enrollment, or who are enrolled at least half-time, in an accredited high school, college, professional, technical, vocational, or trade school pursuing a qualifying degree or certificate.

Note: The Internship Program allows students to perform paid work for Federal agencies and explore Federal careers while still in school. Student Trainee positions will be filled as Intern appointments. The appointment is indefinite and is expected to last for the duration of the student's academic attendance.

Recent Graduates Positions

Who can apply: Individuals who, within the previous two years, completed a qualifying associate, bachelor's, master's, doctoral, professional, vocational or technical degree or certificate program. Veterans unable to apply within two years of receiving their degree due to military service obligation have up to six years after degree completion to apply.

Current students who are scheduled to graduate within nine months may also apply to these positions. However, these students cannot be appointed until after graduation and the official degree has been awarded and conferred.

Direct Hire Authority Positions

Who can apply: Any U.S. citizen or national who is at least 18 years of age.

Note: Federal agencies use Direct Hire Authority to fill vacancies when a critical hiring need or severe shortage of candidates exists. The Forest Service uses Direct Hire Authority to fill critical positions in forestry, wildland firefighting, recreation management, program administration management, and more.

Under the Direct Hire Authority hiring process, veterans' preference and competitive rating and ranking do not apply. All applicants who meet the minimum eligibility requirements for the position may be considered by the hiring manager for selection.

How do I apply for Direct Hire Authority, Student Trainee, and Recent Graduates positions?

Check out upcoming Forest Service [hiring events](#)! During these national hiring events, hundreds of positions - with duty locations across the country - may go live on USAJOBS in a single announcement.

Most Direct Hire Authority and Recent Graduates positions are geared towards entry-level professionals, often with built-in career ladders that provide a sequence of training steps leading to progressively more advanced jobs and skillsets throughout an employee's career. Many are advertised at GS-04 or GS-05 with full performance at GS-06 or GS-07.

Additional Hiring Authorities

You may be eligible for a hiring authority under Schedule A (individuals with disabilities) or if you served with the Peace Corps or AmeriCorps VISTA. Click [here](#) to see the full list of hiring authorities.

Should I focus on applying for Direct Hire Authority positions, Recent Graduates positions, or positions Open to Special Authorities (i.e., PLC)?

Apply to all positions that interest you. There are unique advantages to each. For example, Direct Hire Authority positions do not operate under the competitive rating/ranking system or veterans' preference and may have a quicker timeline for selection. Positions open to special authorities are only open to current and former federal employees and those with special hiring authorities (closed to the general public), so you have the advantage of competing for these positions with a smaller pool of eligible applicants.

Additional Resources

- [Public Lands Corps hiring authority frequently asked questions](#) – Previously recorded webinar
- [U.S. Forest Service Hiring and Recruitment Events](#) – Learn about current and upcoming hiring opportunities.
- [Job Seeker Database](#) – Subscribe to receive weekly emails with information about open job announcements, upcoming hiring events, and trainings.
- [How to create a USAJobs profile](#) – Previously recorded webinar training
- [Understanding hiring eligibilities and qualifications](#) – Previously recorded webinar training
- [How to write a federal resume](#) – Previously recorded webinar training
- [Federal resume guide](#) - How to write a federal resume, including example templates