



Know Your KSAs!

Knowledge = Statements that refer to an organized body of information, usually of a factual or procedural nature.

Skills = Statements refer to the proficient manual, verbal or mental manipulation of data or things. Skills can be measured.

Abilities = Statements that refer to the power to perform an observable activity at the present time.

WHAT TO CONSIDER ABOUT KSAS

- All facets of your formal and informal training
- The different applicable job experiences you have
- Both the technical and non-technical aspects of your training and experience
- The complexity of the experience
- Your responsibility or role on projects or in creating products
- If you have trained others
- If you have drafted or written implemented policy or procedures
- Describe and/or provide examples to address the KSA that you are responding to



HINTS FOR RESPONDING TO KSAS

Remember: NRCS vacancy announcement KSA's focus on a crucial element in the duties of the position the agency and selecting official are looking for.

Learn as much about the position as possible and address the KSAs to match your abilities to the vacant position.

KSAS & COMMUNICATION

Most vacancy announcements have a least one KSA pertaining to communication, such as "Ability to communicate verbally and in writing."

A poor example of a response to this KSA might be: "I communicate verbally with my peers on a daily basis. In college I wrote reports and essays. I use verbal and written communication every day."

Another poor example for administrative support-type positions: "I have scheduled many meetings and conferences in my present position. I am a very good organizer and these events have been very successful."

Please refer to "Better Examples of Responding to a Communications KSA" on page 3 for more information.



✓ CHECKLIST FOR VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Are You Eligible for the Position?

Do you:

- Fall within the agency's definition of who may apply, i.e., U.S. citizen, status, current agency employee, etc.
- Meet the basic and selective factors as indicated on the vacancy announcement?
- Meet the required time-in-grade (if you are a federal employee)?

Can You Meet the Application Deadline?

Are you satisfied with the position's:

- Salary and promotion potential?
- Job duties?
- Physical location?
- Work schedule?
- Travel requirements?
- Additional requirements?



When applying for the job:

- Prepare application form (OF-612) or resume
- Respond to KSA statements (up to 2 pages per KSA)
- Copies of transcripts if educational requirement is necessary for the position
- Complete OF-306 – Declaration for Federal Employment
- DD-214 and any other documentation to support Veterans Preference status, if applicable
- SF-50 – Notice of Personnel Action and completed performance appraisal, if applicable

HOW DO I FIND A JOB WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT?

All Federal job opportunities are posted on the U.S. Office of Personnel Management Web site. Access these announcements at www.usajobs.opm.gov.

Other helpful Web sites for completing applications for Federal jobs:

- <http://wlc.od.nih.gov/careers/ksa/>
- <http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0799/072099cc.htm>
- <http://www.tenstepsforstudents.org/pages/help.html>
- http://wlc.od.nih.gov/careers/ksa/ksa_framework.htm
- <http://federaljobs.net/applyfor.htm#KSA>

Natural Resources Careers Paths for USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

- Agricultural Engineer
- Conservation Agronomist
- Resource Conservationist
- Soil Scientist
- Civil Engineer
- Rangeland Management Specialist
- Soil Conservationist
- Wildlife Biologist



Questions may be sent to:
Human Resources Staff
(530) 792-5695

BETTER EXAMPLES OF RESPONDING TO A COMMUNICATIONS KSA

I have used my verbal communication skills to gather and distribute both technical and non-technical information to a variety of audiences. Examples of this activity are:

- Presentations to classroom groups from grades 4 through 8 and Boys and Girls Scout groups on the effects of soil erosion on water quality.
- I have been actively involved in NRCS soil judging events to five local high schools in the Kern County area which involved providing information to the students about soil profiles, preparing the soil pit, and

providing one on one guidance on the use of soil survey information.

- I have made technical presentations to Soil Conservationist and Soil Scientists at the regional Soil Conservation Society of America convention, the annual California Association of Resource Conservation Districts and the 2002 internal conference of Certified Soil Erosion Specialist held in Toronto, Canada. I have received formal training in presentation techniques, facilitation training, and a college course in public speaking.

Examples of my written communication abilities include:

- I was asked to assist in the drafting of the updated NRCS National Conservation Planning Handbook where I worked with national, regional and state experts in Washington, DC. The final product will be published by November 1st of this year.
- I have written published articles about soil erosion, both by wind and water, for local newspaper publication, the California Farm Press, and the *Soil Scientists of America Journal*.
- I have written fact sheets on wind erosion and air quality, runoff prevention from animal feeding operations, and water quality, etc. These publications have been distributed at NRCS field offices (six) in the San Joaquin Valley, the California Cattlemen's convention, the California Dairyman's conference, and local meetings. The brochures and fact sheets vary in subject matter for rural, urban and suburban interests. A very popular one that we hand out at career fairs, public meetings and county fair booths deals with watering and fertilizing lawns for the most effective

use of water and nutrients. In addition, I have cooperated with NRCS Soil Conservationists who speak Spanish and Hmong to translate fact sheets for use in our outreach activities to limited resource farmers and specialty/exotic produce farmers.

Another form of communication I use that combines verbal and written skills is my use of the computer. I use the Microsoft Office Suite of software to create letters, documents, reports, and special presentation materials (graphs, charts, PowerPoint presentations, etc.).

I use different types of desktop publishing software, such as PageMaker and Photoshop, to create fact sheets, brochures, and photo documentation for reports. I use e-mail for casual correspondence. I also use current agency reporting and tracking systems to report progress on conservation planning activities, timekeeping, and documentation for various agency activities.

