

## ***Portable Careers and Skills***

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### **Portable Skills**

Since the definition of a “career” means successive jobs with higher levels of responsibility and increased pay, few careers lend themselves to Foreign Service life. The best definition of a “portable career” might be finding employment in one’s area of training on a regular basis.

On the other hand, skills that can be applied in different work situations are very portable. For example, every managerial position needs skills in organization, communication, supervision, budget, management, negotiation, and education. Developing some of these skills will enhance the chances of finding employment. For a discussion of skills assessment, see Chapter 2, **The Employment Action Plan**.

Another portable skills area includes those hobbies or special interests that you carry with you – such as cooking, photography, or gardening. Spouses often turn these into jobs, usually freelance, depending upon the needs of the American or local community, language, and work restrictions, etc. The potential in this area is almost limitless.

### **Documenting Your Portable Skills**

Documentation of skills is particularly important for those planning to use their portable skills and interests to find paid employment. See the discussion of the employment portfolio in Chapter 1, **Introduction**. In addition to copies of your current resume, applications, and employment verification forms, make sure you have copies of transcripts or course certificates to prove you have the skill (data processing course, cooking school certificate, etc.). A portfolio containing “clips” from written works, photography, art works, reviews of performances, letters of congratulation and thanks, is essential if you wish to prove skills in the arts.

### **Teaching as a Portable Career**

Although many Foreign Service family members work as teachers, they often work under disadvantages. They periodically come and go from their educational systems while accompanying their spouses on assignments abroad. They miss the U.S. educational setting and stimulation and have a difficult time fulfilling long-range teaching career plans. They often cannot be reemployed in their former jurisdictions upon return to the United States, and, if they are, may not be given credit for all of their teaching experience. (An exception is teachers employed by Fairfax County, Virginia.) Foreign Service teachers also face teaching

“readiness” requirements that frequently cannot be met during their assignments abroad.

But those teachers who teach in overseas schools have gained invaluable cross-cultural sensitivity and skills, experience that should be recognized by school systems, particularly those with increasing numbers of students from other cultures. According to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, by the 21st century, 40 percent of U.S. public school students will be minorities, while 95 percent of the teachers will be white, native-born citizens. Foreign Service teachers, after teaching about an interdependent world in their classrooms, are able to instill that experience into their classes upon return to the United States. For more information about teaching abroad, see Chapter 7, **Employment Abroad**.

### **Teaching in the United States**

In the United States, each state is responsible for its own public schools. Regulations dealing with the requirements and qualifications necessary for certification are developed and imposed by each state’s department of education and may vary from state to state. Most states require certification (an official review of qualifications, previous educational experience, and credentials) of all professionals interested in teaching in its public elementary and secondary schools. Some states require citizenship for certification, while others grant temporary certification to noncitizens interested in teaching in public schools. For a complete report on the certification requirements in every state and U.S. territory, refer to the *Manual on Certification and Preparation of Educational Personnel in the United States*, prepared by the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education Certification (NASDTEC). For full citations for all books discussed in this chapter, see Chapter 13, **Resources and Bibliography**.

After procuring certification, the process of obtaining actual employment also differs from state to state. Many state departments of education maintain a placement bureau, but often each school district hires personnel for its own schools. You can obtain lists of schools and school districts from the state department of education, usually for a small fee. For a complete listing of public schools throughout the United States, consult the *Directory of Public School Systems in the U.S.*, published by the Association for School, College, and University Staffing. ASCUS can also provide the exact hiring procedure of each state.

In most states, private elementary and secondary schools do not have the same certification requirements as public schools. Information on individual private schools can be obtained from the *Handbook of Private*

*Schools*, published annually by Porter Sargent Publishers. See Chapter 13, **Resources and Bibliography** for full citation.

### **Sources of Employment Information**

- *Job Search Handbook*, produced by the American Association for Employment in Education (AAEE).
- *Education Week*, a weekly newspaper often carries advertisements for teacher placement agencies.
- National Association of Independent Schools publishes information sheets on how to find a teaching position, a list of placement agencies, and a list of internship programs.

#### Internet Sources for Teacher Employment

National Library of Education	<a href="http://www.ericsp.org">www.ericsp.org</a>
Recruiting New Teachers	<a href="http://www.rnt.org">www.rnt.org</a>
National Association of Teachers' Agencies	<a href="http://www.jobsforteachers.com">www.jobsforteachers.com</a>

### **Employment Initiative for Foreign Service Teachers**

To alleviate some of the difficulties faced by Foreign Service teachers, the Family Liaison Office negotiated an agreement with the Fairfax County, Virginia school system. In the past, Fairfax County teachers leaving the system for any reason had to resign with no assurance of reemployment. If they were reemployed, they received no more than five years of experience credit, no matter how many years they had taught. Under this new agreement, a Fairfax County teacher who leaves a teaching position in the school system to accompany her/his spouse on a diplomatic assignment abroad and who engages in an international education experience during the time abroad can now apply for a year's leave of absence (renewable annually) for the term of the spouse's assignment. The international education experience could include teaching or administration in an international school, attending an international college or university, or participating in other activities that promote understanding of a different culture or nationality. Salary credit for teaching/administration experience in a school abroad with an international enrollment may be requested. Fairfax County, which enrolls a significant number of children from other cultures, sees this initiative as

a way of increasing the number of culturally aware teachers in their school system.

### **The FAST-TRAIN Program**

The unique qualifications of Foreign Service spouses make them good candidates for The Foreign Affairs Spouses Teacher Training Project (FAST-TRAIN), which prepares elementary and middle school (kindergarten through grade 8) teachers for overseas schools. The program was initiated by the Department of State's Office of Overseas Schools (A/OS), and is sponsored by the Graduate School of Education at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. The curriculum consists of six teacher education courses offered over a one year period. Classes are specifically designed for teaching in international schools.

Admission requirements for FAST-TRAIN include a bachelor's degree, a 3.00 GPA (approximately B-) in the last 60 credit hours of college or university work, and three satisfactory letters of recommendation. Applicants also should have completed the following general education requirements: 12 semester hours in the humanities, 12 in the social sciences, and 12 in natural sciences and mathematics. (This general education requirement is subject to change by the Virginia Board of Education.) The general education requirements can be met while enrolled in the FAST-TRAIN program.

Upon successful completion of the academic program and passing scores in the National Teachers Examinations, participants will receive a provisional teaching certificate from the Commonwealth of Virginia. They will then be eligible to teach at the elementary or middle school level. Once participants have completed 2 years of teaching abroad, they will receive the Collegiate Professional Certificate, the regular teaching license for Virginia teachers. Since Virginia has a reciprocal license agreement with more than 20 other states, FAST-TRAIN graduates will be qualified to teach in a variety of settings throughout the United States and abroad.

Upon completion of four additional courses (30 semester hours) FAST-TRAIN students can receive a M.Ed. degree with a specialization in Middle education.

For more information about this program, contact:

Dr. Jack Levy, Coordinator  
FAST-TRAIN Program  
Graduate School of Education MS 4B3  
George Mason University  
Fairfax, VA 22030-4444  
Telephone: 703-993-3689/3688

FAX: 703-993-3336  
E-mail: jlevy@gmu.edu

## Teaching English as a Second Language

As the use of English has risen, both in the United States and around the world, so has the demand for those who can teach English to students for whom it is not a native language. However, being able to speak English is not sufficient to teach it as a second or foreign language. (This teaching skill is usually abbreviated ESL (English as a second language) or EFL (English as a foreign language). ESL/EFL is also not the same as teaching English as a first language. ESL/EFL teachers must be able to give their students a basic, working command of the English language along with cultural rules of communication, such as how to make suggestions and how to apologize. These cultural rules and other aspects of using English and American culture form the basis for ESL/EFL instruction.

**ESL/EFL Qualifications programs.** A bachelor's degree is considered the minimum qualification for employment as an ESL/EFL teacher. Professional training beyond a bachelor's degree is strongly suggested. A Master's degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) is offered by many U.S. universities. (Note that TESOL also refers to the professional association, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.) Thirty to thirty-six hours of credit are usually required, depending on whether a thesis is an option. A quality program includes some supervised practice teaching.

The following Washington area universities offer professional preparation programs:

### Definitions

*ESL—English as a Second Language:* programs in English-speaking countries to teach those who do not speak English as a first language. Outside the United States, it is commonly called TESL.

*EFL—English as a Foreign Language:* programs in non-English-speaking countries to teach English to those who need it for business or tourism. Outside the United States, it is commonly called TEFL.

*TESOL—Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages:* the name of the degree one obtains to become a teacher in the field; e.g., an M.A. or a certificate in TESOL. Also the name of the professional association for those involved in teaching English to speakers of other languages.

## Definitions

*ESOL—English to Speakers of Other Languages:* is used in the United States for English programs in public schools.

*TOEFL—Test of English as a Foreign Language:* administered by the Educational Testing Service to international students applying to U.S. colleges.

*IATEFL—International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language:* a professional association based in the United Kingdom.

American University Department of Language and Foreign Studies

Web site: [www.american.edu/tesol](http://www.american.edu/tesol)

Graduate Program in Linguistics M.A. degree and certificate programs

George Mason University

Web site: [www.gmu.edu/programs/esl](http://www.gmu.edu/programs/esl)

M.Ed., DA.Ed in Bilingual/Multi-cultural/ESL Education; M.Ed. in TESOL

The Department of English

Graduate Certificate in TESL

Georgetown University

Web site: [www.georgetown.edu](http://www.georgetown.edu)

Certificate in TESOL; MAT in TESOL

Trinity College

Web site: [www.trinitydc.edu](http://www.trinitydc.edu)

English as a Foreign Language Maryland ESOL certification

University of Maryland, Baltimore Campus

Web site: [www.umbc.edu/esol](http://www.umbc.edu/esol)

Bilingual/ESL Teacher Training Program M.A. in ESL; K-12 ESL certificate

University of Maryland, College Park

Web site: [www.inform.umd.edu/EDUC/Depts](http://www.inform.umd.edu/EDUC/Depts)

M.Ed./PhD/Ed.D. in TESOL

University of Virginia

Web site: <http://uvacc.virginia.edu/northern>

ESL teacher training

Contact information for the above schools can be found in Chapter 13, **Resources and Bibliography**.

The Overseas Briefing Center (OBC) at FSI offers an ESL course for Foreign Service family members. “English Teaching” explains teaching English as a second language, provides a survey of materials and methods, and discusses employment opportunities. For more information, contact the Overseas Briefing Center. See Chapter 1, **Introduction**, for information on contacting the OBC.

**Certification Outside the United States.** In the United Kingdom, a variety of certificates is offered, and many opportunities exist for short-term training. For a complete listing of courses, write for the EFL Careers Guide from:

EFL Limited  
64 Ormly Road Ramsey, Isle of Man  
United Kingdom

Information about ESL/EFL courses in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and private certificate courses in the United States can be found in Chapter 13, **Resources and Bibliography**.

**ESL Teaching in the United States.** Because of the changing composition of the U.S. population, ESL teaching opportunities abound in public schools (K-12), bilingual programs, adult education programs, private language schools, and at colleges and universities. In most states, ESL teacher certification or endorsement is required for teaching ESL at the elementary and secondary levels in U.S. public schools. Certification requirements can be obtained from state departments of education. Credentials are usually reciprocal from state to state.

Many Foreign Service family members have been able to teach ESL in adult education programs based on their overseas experience in the field. ESL certification is not required to teach in these programs. However, most adult education positions are part-time, evening programs, and they do not offer any benefits.

**ESL/EFL Teaching Abroad.** For information about teaching in international schools, see Chapter 7, **Employment Abroad**.

Many ESL/EFL teaching opportunities exist outside the United States, although increasingly programs in countries such as Japan and Mexico seek teachers with a certificate or a degree. A number of short-term training programs provide an “international certificate” that qualifies a person for employment outside the United States. Part-time teaching

positions and tutoring jobs are usually available overseas although pay scales and other employment conditions vary widely.

#### Consular Information on Teaching Abroad

The Consular Section at the U.S. Embassy in Seoul has produced a paper on the pros and cons of teaching English in Korea. It is available by writing to the Embassy.

Other U.S. Embassies may have produced similar information.

**Global Education Program.** English teaching is a major component of the Department of State's Advising Centers located at many posts abroad. These centers usually hire their English teachers locally. Information about the Global Education Program can be found in Chapter 7, **Employment Abroad.**

**Getting Started in ESL.** Perhaps the best way to get started is to contact TESOL, Teachers of English to Students of Other Languages, the professional organization for those in the field. TESOL's *Directory of Professional Preparation Programs in TESOL in the United States* lists all U.S. institutions offering teacher training programs, including program descriptions, tuition, terms, courses, faculty scholarships, etc. *TESOL Matters*, the *TESOL Journal*, and the *TESOL Quarterly* are all publications that can provide introductory reading material. These publications are available in most public libraries as well as from TESOL.

At the TESOL Annual Convention, participants have access to over 900 presentations, plenary addresses by leaders in the field, a publishers' exhibit, and an employment clearinghouse. It is an ideal place to network with professionals to find out more about the field and to find employment opportunities. Every year, TESOL sponsors a Summer Institute at a university. Leading educators from around the world offer intensive 3- to 6-week courses for newcomers to the field. For more information about these programs, contact TESOL at the following address:

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)  
1600 Cameron Street, Suite 300  
Alexandria, VA 22314-1751  
Telephone: 703-836-0774  
Web site: [www.tesol.edu](http://www.tesol.edu)

The Washington Area Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (WATESOL) offers the following services to members: a fall convention, a spring conference, a professional development series, a program directory, a membership directory, scholarships to members, and a subscription to WATESOL News.

Washington Area Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages  
(WATESOL)  
P.O. Box 25502  
Washington, DC 20007

### **Training as a Portable Career**

Training and development is a career with a future. The American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) estimates that American companies spend more than \$30 billion annually on formal training programs and expects that number to grow. Although some large companies have training divisions, most organizations hire trainers on a freelance or contract basis. Most training is done in the workshop setting — for government agencies, for businesses, for schools, for community groups, and for churches.

Although some people enter the field with a degree in human resource development or formal training in instructional design, public speaking, and adult learning theory, others become trainers without formal education credentials. Industry insiders say that in addition to good platform skills, all you really need is a particular area of knowledge or expertise. If you think you are interested in this field, you should identify an area(s) of expertise and volunteer to design and deliver a workshop or seminar on the topic to a current employer, a religious or fraternal organization, an adult education program, or a community organization. This is a good way to determine if you like training and wish to gain additional knowledge of the field.

In addition to having subject expertise, good trainers should be able to design a training course, implement the design, evaluate it, and make corrections. Trainers also need some knowledge of adult development and learning styles. There are many courses to teach one to be a trainer. The Overseas Briefing Center at FSI offers “Introduction to Effective Training Skills for Foreign Service Spouses” to U.S. Government employees and family members anticipating or returning from an overseas assignment. The 1-week, introductory-level course covers the elements of training theory and how to design a workshop, adult learning styles, and presentation skills. For more information, contact the OBC. See Chapter 1, **Introduction**, for information about the OBC.

### Good Idea File

There is increasing call for trainers with languages other than English. Family Members who are bilingual or have an excellent grasp of a foreign language should consider the training field.

Many universities offer degree or certificate programs in training, often called human resource development. Georgetown University's School of Summer and Continuing Education offers a program, the "Training Specialist Certificate Program," which meets 3 days a month for one academic year. It offers modules on various aspects of training and mentoring with a practicum (design and delivery of a training program required). Two of the modules are stand-alone and can be taken separately.

Numerous professional associations and organizations for trainers provide information, training, and networking possibilities. See Chapter 13, **Resources and Bibliography**, for more information.

### **Interpreting/ Translating as a Portable Career**

A thorough knowledge of one or more foreign languages is certainly a valuable transferable and portable skill. In addition to interpreting and translating, the person who knows one or more foreign languages has an advantage in competing for jobs, especially in international fields. Professions in which a knowledge of foreign languages is useful or required are international banking and business, journalism, hotel and restaurant management, travel and tour organization, and diplomacy. Many cities and states have large non-English-speaking populations, and they need social services, health, education, and law enforcement personnel who are fluent in another language in addition to English.

**Interpreters** must be able to listen to a speech or statement in one language and, from notes, repeat clearly and precisely in another language the ideas just presented. Simultaneous interpreting requires the additional ability to listen to one language while speaking another language at the same time. Interpreters must be exceptionally fluent in the language into which they interpret, and their speech must be free of any objectionable accent or impediment. They should be well and broadly educated and almost bilingual. Practical experience in several specialized fields is helpful, and a knowledge of political science and economics is important.

Since the work often calls for extensive travel, interpreters must have stamina and a willingness to serve away from their home.

**Translators** must have the ability to translate from several foreign languages into English, or to write (advertising copy, technical specifications, or diplomatic, informational, or scientific material) in a foreign language at an educated native level. Translators need a broad background of education and experience, as they may be required to translate documents on many diverse subjects.

Translators, both staff and freelance, are needed by national and international agencies as well as in private industry. The United Nations, the Department of State, and some other U.S. Government agencies employ small translating staffs.

### **Conference Interpreting**

Limited opportunities exist for full-time and freelance simultaneous conference interpreters. The United Nations is the largest employer of interpreters, all of whom must have an active command of one and an excellent passive knowledge of at least two of the organization's official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish. The Office of Language Services of the Department of State, the next largest employer, provides service in most of the world's principal languages. The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Organization of American States, the Inter-American Defense Board, the Inter-American Defense College, the Pan American Health Organization, and INTELSAT are other organizations in the Washington, D.C. area that have small interpreter staffs supplemented by freelance interpreters.

Freelance interpreters usually get short-term contracts to interpret at private international conferences in fields such as science, medicine, or economics. To compete successfully, it is an advantage to be multilingual, with a widely spoken mother tongue and a strong passive knowledge of two or three other world languages. The principal languages used in the freelance conference field are English, French, German, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish.

### **Escort Interpreting**

The Department of State hires escort interpreters to accompany foreign individuals and delegations traveling around the United States and to interpret for them in situations that are generally informal, but may involve in-depth professional exchanges on a wide variety of subjects. The Department of State maintains a contract roster of freelance escorts who are hired to take short-term travel assignments (usually 30 days at a time) as the need arises. Travel agencies that organize tours for foreign groups

and business concerns that receive foreign clients are the other principal employers of freelance interpreters.

### **Court Interpreting**

Several state court systems as well as the Federal courts call on freelance interpreters to assist in trials and hearings involving non-English-speaking people. To qualify for such assignments, it is necessary to pass an entrance examination administered by the court system concerned.

### **Writing, Editing, Publishing as a Portable Career**

Numerous jobs can be filled by a person with writing, editing, and publishing skills. Almost every employer produces publications – either for customers or employees. In addition, marketing, advertising, and development departments require employees with writing skills. The traditional sources of employment for writers and editors are book publishers and the news media (including not only newspapers and magazines, but also radio and television). In addition, technical writers, who translate technical material into a more easily understood form, are needed by a wide variety of firms. An essential factor to determine when looking for a writing/editing job is the pace of the organization. Working for daily or weekly publications is extremely fast-paced; you must be able to work well under pressure. Monthly or quarterly publications have a much slower pace.

When applying for any writing/editing position, you must have writing samples or “clips” to show what kind of work you can do. The “Catch-22” here is that you can’t get published if you don’t have clips, and you can’t get clips if you can’t get published. The best way to get clips is through freelance writing.

### **Freelance Writing**

Newspapers and magazines are always interested in stories written by freelance writers. Although the chances of breaking into one of the national publications such as the *Washington Post*, *Time Magazine*, or *Redbook* are slim, thousands of other publications are available.

Magazines and journals are published on every possible subject. Go to a large city newsstand and look at the selection. Buy copies of those magazines that have subjects of interest (quilting, computers, scuba diving, child care) and read carefully to see what kinds of articles are published.

Directories of publications can be found in the reference section of most public libraries. The Gale Research Company publishes a number of

directories of publications. The *Gale Directory of Publications* is the most comprehensive source of information on newspapers, magazines, journals, newsletters, and special interest periodicals published in the United States and Canada. The *Gale International Directory of Publications* is a guide to more than 4,800 newspapers, magazines, and other periodicals circulating primarily outside the United States and Canada.

Another way to break into the field is to write articles for a professional association in which you are interested. For more information on using professional associations in the job search, see Chapter 4, **Job-Search Techniques**. Most associations publish newsletters or journals, and

#### Good Idea File

Most large newspapers, magazines, and radio and television studios offer tours of their facilities to the public. If you are interested in working for an organization, take the tour so that you can see what the working situation is like. Look out for the following:

- The atmosphere—does it seem loud, noisy, messy, disorganized—can you work in this atmosphere?
- What are the employees wearing? This often indicates the degree of formality in the organization and can provide a valuable clue if you are asked to come for an interview.
- What kind of equipment are they using? Do you know how to use it?

although they usually do not pay very well, they do provide a source for clips. *Gale Research's Encyclopedia of Associations* lists more than 23,000 national and international organizations, including commercial, environmental, legal, governmental, public administration, military, technological, educational, cultural, medical, public affairs, fraternal, ethnic, religious, hereditary, patriotic, hobby, athletic, labor unions, associations, tourism, fraternities/sororities, and fan clubs. The *Encyclopedia of Associations* is also available on CD-ROM (Gale Global Access) in the Department of State library.

If you want to submit freelance articles to publications, you should keep the following points in mind.

- You must be thoroughly familiar with the publication, the types of stories it publishes, the types of stories it (and its competitors) have published in the past. No editor wants to hear about your great idea for a story that his/her magazine published 6 months ago.
- A “query letter” asks an editor if he/she is interested in a particular story. Query letters can be sent to a number of different editors.
- When contacting an editor, you should provide a list of possible story ideas.
- Many editors will ask for an article to be written “on spec.” That means that they will only pay for it if they like it.
- Never, ever miss a deadline—it can be the kiss of death.

See Chapter 13, **Resources and Bibliography**, for a list of resources for writers.

### **Desktop Publishing**

Every writer today should be able to use a computer and one or more word processing systems. Some editors ask that submissions be on floppy disk, and many smaller organizations require that anyone hired as an editor be able to design publications and produce graphics also.

When doing the research on a company that you would like to work for (or submit articles to), find out what computer/word processing software they use. If you are going to learn a computer or word processing software, it would be wise to choose the industry standard.

Computer — Macintosh or IBM compatible

Desktop Publishing — Pagemaker or Quark Express

Word Processing — Word Perfect or Microsoft Word

#### What To Write About?

Experts always say, “Write about what you know.” Maybe a more important axiom would be, “Write about what you like. Your activities and interests are good sources for articles.”

## Contracting as a Portable Career

Contracting, while not a career in itself, is a way to use your portable skills. The Federal Government as well as many private organizations use a variety of contractors to do a variety of jobs. See Chapter 7, **Employment Abroad**, for information on contract positions at posts abroad.

Consider the following points when doing “contract work” or when hiring someone to do contract work for you.

1. **Put the agreement in writing.** This can be either a simple letter or a legal contract — but should be signed by all parties concerned. The agreement should state the objectives, the scope of work to be performed, services the employer will provide, deadlines, fees, expenses, and billing and payment plans.
2. **Describe the objectives and the standards of the project that will be performed.** This establishes the ground rules so that no duplication of effort occurs and everyone understands who will be doing what.
3. **Negotiate the changes that might influence the fee.** It is not fair to expect a contractor to perform extra work without remuneration.
4. **Establish a practical deadline.** Ensure that both sides are being realistic. Without a deadline, quality may slip or the person performing the work may feel justified seeking additional payment.
5. **Determine the supervisors, if any.** The supervisor should be someone familiar with the project.
6. **Make sure that the contractor has access to the necessary contacts and/or resources needed to perform the duties.**
7. **Fulfill your commitments.** If you do not, the project may suffer and future relationships may be jeopardized. Be professional.
8. **Process your bills expeditiously.** The contractor is responsible for submitting estimates of expenses (before incurring them), submitting the work, and everything related to it. It is unfair to give a contractor a “blank check” and then refuse to honor the bills. If you are the employer and your contractor fulfills his/her commitment well within the budgetary limitations and time frame agreed to, don’t forget to give the person kudos for a job well done.

**Note:** Foreign Service family members should be aware that contract work for the Federal Government does not provide Government benefits such as Executive Order 12721 eligibility, years of service, or highest previous

rate. For a full discussion of benefits, see Chapter 6, **Federal Government Employment**, and Chapter 7, **Employment Abroad**.

### **Contracting with the Foreign Service Institute**

The Foreign Service Institute (FSI) comprises five main sections: the School of Area Studies, the School of Language Studies, the School of Professional Studies, the Overseas Briefing Center, and the Senior Seminar. All FSI schools/centers use contractors. Most contracts issued are for services such as: trainers on a variety of topics applicable to carrying out duties overseas, course designers, chairpersons, facilitators, needs assessors and other surveyors; and self-contained projects such as the Cross-Cultural Research Project.

#### **Good Idea File**

Before bidding on an FSI contract, contact those who have held the contract in the past. They are usually willing to explain the procedures and to help you formulate a realistic bid. (One experienced bidder explained that first-timers almost always bid too high.)

If your bid is not chosen, you can request to know the reason.

Those interested in doing contract work for FSI should write a Statement of Capability — a synopsis of skills and knowledge that would be of interest to the Office of Acquisitions at FSI. The statement may accompany a resume and should be addressed directly to the contracting officer. Also, send a copy to the school/center for which you wish to provide service. (To find out the various departments at FSI, consult the Foreign Service Institute Schedule of Courses.)

When FSI wishes to contract for services, a Statement of Work is written. The Statement contains a general description and the objective of the project, the specific duties of the contractor, a description of the final product desired, period of the contract (including what exactly is due at each date, if more than one final product), criteria for selection (qualifications of the contractor), and documentation required. Statements of Work are sent under cover of an SF-18, Request for Quotation, to people who have expressed an interest in providing a particular service. Potential contractors come, in part, from vendor lists that have been put together from Statements of Capability. Therefore, to even hear about contracts, people need to make themselves known to the contracting office.

### Getting Your Bid in on Time

Your bid **MUST** be submitted by the time and date listed on the Statement of Work. A postmark is not sufficient. A late bid, even by a few minutes, will not be accepted. Check the time carefully; it is usually earlier than close of business on the date given.

To bid on a contract, it is important to follow the instructions on the SF-18, Request for Quotation, exactly. Pay attention to the evaluation criteria (if any) listed at the end of the Statement of Work. This will tell you what the evaluators are looking for in awarding the contract. The weight of each criterion may be given in percentages. If not, assume the criteria are listed in order of importance. Make sure you submit any documentation required in the solicitation.

To determine the dollar figure of your bid, multiply your fee per day times the total number of days to complete the project. The bid should consider the amount of time needed for research/interviews, planning, “stand-up” training time, preparing written materials, etc. Remember, the contractor agrees to complete the product requested and must do so, whether or not it takes more time than estimated.

Contracts are awarded on the basis of qualifications as well as price. Someone with a higher bid may receive the contract if he/she clearly has better qualifications to do the job than has the lowest bidder. Questions about the solicitation must be addressed only to the contracting officer listed on the SF-18. The contracting officer is a neutral person who will provide the same information to all bidders. Once the final bidding date is reached and a decision is made, the contracting officer will contact the successful bidder. All bidders should be notified whether or not they received the contract. If you have not been notified within 10 days after the solicitation has closed, you may contact the contracting officer to check the status of the bid.

### Good Idea File

The Institute for Diplomatic Studies contracts for the transcription of interviews with retired Foreign Service officers. This is a good opportunity for family members who are only temporarily in the United States for language training or for those with small children at home. The work is done at home on your own time. The only requirements are a computer (preferably with WordPerfect) and a tape recorder. Payment is a flat rate per tape transcribed. The stories of Foreign Service life are fascinating.

## **USAID Contracting**

The Agency for International Development (USAID) carries out economic assistance programs designed to help people in developing countries develop their human and economic resources, increase their productive capacities, and improve the quality of human life as well as promote economic and political stability in friendly countries. USAID's areas of concentration include the following: agriculture, AIDS prevention, child survival, education and human resource development, energy, environment, health, nutrition, population planning, rural development, and transfer of technology.

To fulfill its mandate, USAID hires contractors to develop and complete projects. In fact, two USAID contractors are hired for every direct-hire employee. A Foreign Service family member interested in employment as a USAID contractor should do as much research and networking as possible in Washington before going overseas.

Those interested in USAID development work should visit the USAID library. The library's collection supports USAID's development efforts in its strategic objective areas: democracy and governance, economic growth, education and training, environment and agriculture, humanitarian assistance, and population, health, and nutrition. The Library's online catalog can be found on the Internet at the address given below.

The USAID Development Center, located next door to the library, also has information of use to people who want to bid on USAID contracts.

USAID Library  
Ronald Reagan Building  
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW Room M.01-010  
Washington, DC 20004  
Telephone: 202-712-0579  
Web site: [www.dec.org/partners/library/index.html](http://www.dec.org/partners/library/index.html)

If you find an USAID project and/or contractor in the country to which you have been assigned, you should submit a resume and try to get an interview. Even if the contractor does not have a position at the moment, he/she will usually keep the resume on file for future reference.

You should also consult the USAID country desk officer for the country to which you have been assigned. Desk officers often know of projects that are being advertised at post or which will be coming up soon.

## Other Portable Skills

### Computers

Although computer skills are extremely portable, they must be constantly upgraded with the latest technology. Employers are looking for specialties — database, communications, or application design. The basic ability to understand and work local area networks and wide area networks is expected of nearly all computer professionals in today's market.

Customer service and user support are two areas within the computer field that are in demand. Employers are looking for individuals who not only have basic computer skills, but who also can work effectively with clients.

### Internet Web Design

The fantastic growth of the Internet and allied fields has produced many opportunities for those with appropriate skills. (For general information on the Internet, see Chapter 3, **Using the Internet in the Job Search**.) Even those without information technology skills can break into this field if they have the ability to write and communicate effectively.

Web design is one of the new careers spawned by the Internet. To develop a Web page, one needs to know HTML (Hyper-Text Markup Language). There are a number of places in the Washington area where you can learn HTML including the following:

- Computer Institute [www.computerinstitute.com](http://www.computerinstitute.com)
- EEI Communications [www.eecom.com](http://www.eecom.com)
- George Washington University Center for Career Education  
[www.gwu.edu/cce](http://www.gwu.edu/cce)
- Knowlogy [www.knowlogy.com](http://www.knowlogy.com)
- University of Virginia Northern Virginia Center  
[www.uvace.virginia.edu/northern](http://www.uvace.virginia.edu/northern)
- USDA Graduate School [www.grad.usda.gov](http://www.grad.usda.gov)
- WestLake Internet Training [www.west-lake.com](http://www.west-lake.com)

Addresses and telephone numbers for the above institutions can be found in Chapter 13, **Resources and Bibliography**.

Once you have learned how to develop a Web site, the next thing is to get experience by building a Web portfolio. Offer to develop a Web site for your religious organization, local community association, club, or school.

## Web Designer Associations

Web designers have their own professional associations that provide information and sometimes job leads:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| • DC Web Women                          | <a href="http://www.dcwebwomen.org">www.dcwebwomen.org</a>   |
| • Carbon Space                          | <a href="http://www.carbonspace.org">www.carbonspace.org</a> |
| • Netpreneur Exchange                   | <a href="http://www.netpreneur.org">www.netpreneur.org</a>   |
| • Assoc. of Women in Computing          | <a href="http://www.awcncc.org">www.awcncc.org</a>           |
| • Association of Internet Professionals | <a href="http://www.dcaip.org">www.dcaip.org</a>             |

## Health Care

The allied health fields are a growing source of employment for those with nursing or other medical skills. In addition to one-on-one patient care, there is also teaching, research, and administrative work. As medical technology advances and people live longer, increasingly people are undergoing rather complex procedures at home (intravenous therapy, chemotherapy, etc.) and the need for advanced home care increases.

Many nurses are setting up their own businesses – temporary nurse agencies, pharmaceutical distribution, day care for the aged, performance reviews of hospitals, and mobile dialysis. Another new field is liability advice firms that do research for attorneys’ personal injury and malpractice cases. The American Association of Nurse Attorneys has more than 500 members.

## Freelancing

Foreign Service family members are very resourceful in using hobbies and interests to create jobs or to develop skills. Overseas, providing services as a freelancer does not usually require a work permit if it entails providing a service only to the Embassy and/or the diplomatic community.

When setting up a freelance business overseas, however, you must check to ensure that your enterprise does not violate any regulations or health/safety laws of the Mission or the host country. For instance, you may need a work permit. Note also that the government mail system (both APO/FPO and pouch) can be used only for personal mail and cannot be used for business purposes. See Chapter 7, **Employment Abroad** for more information about freelancing at U.S. posts abroad.

Careful bookkeeping practices are necessary in any kind of business. Any service in which money changes hands has tax implications. For information about tax implications of an overseas business, see Chapter 7, **Employment Abroad**. See below for information on starting your own business.

#### Good Idea File

Would you like to learn a skill that could turn into a freelance career? The *Washington Post* publishes an annual “Back-to-Class Guide” (usually in late August) containing a wide variety of classes and workshops — everything from antique appraisal to woodworking. The *Post’s* Food Section also publishes an annual Cooking class guide containing a wide variety of cooking classes and professional training. For more information, see their Web site: [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)

#### Freelance Careers

Accountant/bookkeeper	Fund-raiser
Actress	Gardener
Animal/house sitter	Home Economist
Anthropologist	Home/business organizer
Antique furniture restorer	Interior decorator
Antiques dealer	Jewelry designer
Archeologist	Leather goods dealer
Beautician/barber	Maid
Cake decorator	Messenger
Calligrapher	Model
Camera repair person	Party planner
Caterer	Pet groomer
Ceramist	Photographer
Child care specialist	Piano tuner
Children’s entertainer	Picture framer
Conference organizer	Quilt maker
Consumer researcher	Researcher
Copper tooler	Seminar leader
Critic	Tax preparer
Doll maker	Translator
Dressmaker/tailor	Travel agent
Electronics repair person	Typist
Exam Proctor	Upholsterer
Financial planner	Video producer
Flower arranger	Weaver

## Starting Your Own Business

Experts say it is vital to do your homework before taking the step of starting your own business — particularly if it means committing your savings, your home, or other hard-earned assets. Expert advice is a necessity — accountants, lawyers, bankers, and loan specialists all can provide important information.

### OBC Workshop

The Overseas Briefing Center periodically offers a workshop on setting up a small business. Offered at night, this brief overview provides information and resources for budding entrepreneurs. Call the OBC for more information. (See Chapter 1, **Introduction**.)

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) has a wide selection of written material on small businesses — either free or nominally priced. The motto of the SBA is to “help people get into business and stay in business.” Guaranteed loan programs are available to eligible small businesses through banks and other private lenders, including special loan programs for minority-owned small businesses. Venture money is available for privately owned and operated small business investment companies.

The SBA provides counseling services through its Management Assistance Staff, the Active Corps of Executives (ACE), or the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE). SCORE is an independent nonprofit organization with over 8,000 counselors who are retired business people with years of practical business and management skills, and access to the latest managerial techniques.

For information on Small Business Administration programs, call or write the following:

Small Business Administration  
1110 Vermont Avenue NW, Suite 900  
Washington, DC 20005  
Telephone: 202-606-4000 or 1-800-827-5722 (general answer desk)  
Web site: **[www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov)**

SCORE National Office  
409 3rd Street SW, Suite 6th floor  
Washington, DC 20024  
Telephone: 202-205-6762 or 1-800-634-0245  
Web site: **[www.score.org](http://www.score.org)**

## Home-Based Businesses

Running a small business from home has distinct advantages. There is no commute, the costs of renting an office is minimized, and child care concerns can be lessened. However, to make a home-based business work efficiently, certain rules must be made.

- Who answers the telephone? It is disconcerting for a customer to have to deal with a small child who wants to talk. If possible, a separate business line should be installed.
- What part of the home is considered “business space” and is this space off-limits to the family?

### Web Sites for Small Business Owners

- IVillage is for those who are thinking about starting a small business – especially from home, contains information about hot home businesses, taking a course online, and building home pages. [www.ivillage.com/work](http://www.ivillage.com/work)
- Smalloffice.com belongs to the magazines, *Home Office Computing and Small Business Computing*. It contains articles on many aspects of starting and operating a small business. [www.smalloffice.com](http://www.smalloffice.com)
- Small Business Advisor advises and assists individuals thinking of starting or already running a business. It also assists companies who do business with U.S. government agencies. [www.isquare.com](http://www.isquare.com)
- IdeaCafe combines information, resources, and interviews with leading entrepreneurs, interactive exams, budget sheets, and financing sources. <http://ideacafe.com>
- Microsoft Smallbiz helps smaller companies achieve results by applying technology solutions to business challenges. [www.microsoft.com/smallbiz/](http://www.microsoft.com/smallbiz/)
- Digital Daily is an IRS site that provides information to help meet the tax obligations of small businesses. Has a list of free services. [www.irs.ustreas.gov/prod/cover.htm/](http://www.irs.ustreas.gov/prod/cover.htm/)
- Marketplace Resource Center provides free demographic information and marketplace data, including instant market

analyses, and links to a bookstore and online library.  
**www.imarketinc.com**

- Business Know-How is an interactive newsletter for home office and small business owners who are looking for ideas.  
**www.businessknowhow.com**
- The search engine, Yahoo, operates a small business section that discusses many of the necessities of operating a small business. To reach the section, go to the Yahoo search engine, then to the business and economy section, then to the small business section.
- Entreworld, from the Kauffman Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership, addresses aspects of starting and building a business.  
**www.entreworld.org**
- For help in writing a business plan, see **www.BizPlanIt.com**

- How are family duties divided up? Does the home-based partner bear an inordinate share?
- Who is responsible for child care?

The Women's Center in Vienna, Virginia periodically runs a seminar, "Running a Home-Based Business" For more information about home-based businesses, see Chapter 13, **Resources and Bibliography**.

#### A Little Imagination

- If you cannot be licensed to nurse at your post, you might teach English-language medical terms to local doctors and nurses.
- If you design jewelry as a hobby, you might turn that into a small business or build a cottage industry for talented host-country nationals.
- If you cannot work as a journalist, you might be able to edit English-language publications.
- If you cannot be a stockbroker this tour, why not offer workshops on investment strategies.

- If you have cared for dogs all your life, offer obedience training classes or pet grooming services.
- Are you a weaver or a quilter? There may be a market for your skills in the local or expatriate population.
- Can you do desktop publishing or design graphics on a computer? American and local businessmen at your post may be clamoring for your skills.

### **Self-Employment and Social Security Credit**

You are considered to be self-employed if you engage in a trade, business, or profession, either by yourself or as a partner. Self-employment earnings are reported at the time Federal income taxes are filed. The amount of your future Social Security benefits depends on the amount of your earnings. Therefore, it is important for you to report all your self-employment earnings up to the maximum. For other information about Social Security, see Chapter 1, **Introduction**. Special rules for self-employment abroad are explained in Chapter 7, **Employment Abroad**.

Social Security credit is given for any self-employment earnings of \$400 or more a year. You must pay both the employer and the employee portions of the FICA tax (currently, 15.3 percent of taxable income up to a maximum of \$68,400). If your net income is less than \$400, you may still earn Social Security credits by using an optional method of reporting earnings. If you have wages as well as self-employment earnings, the wages count first for Social Security. If your wages are less than the Social Security maximum, you pay the self-employment tax only on the difference between your wages and the maximum.

#### **Figuring Net Earnings From Self-Employment**

Your net earnings for Social Security are your gross earnings from your trade or business minus all of your allowable business deductions and depreciation. If you have more than one business, combine the profit or loss from all of them when you figure your net earnings. This information should be reported on Schedule SE (Computation of Social Security Self-Employment Tax) and filed with your Federal income tax return.

If you are a U.S. citizen or resident engaged in a trade or business outside the United States, you must figure your self-employment net earnings without regard to any foreign earned income exclusions. For more information on foreign-earned income, see Chapter 7, **Employment Abroad**. This information should be reported on Form 2553 and filed with your Federal income tax return.

Your local Social Security office has a fact sheet entitled “If You’re Self-Employed.” See Chapter 1, **Introduction**, for information on how to contact Social Security. IRS publication 553, Self-Employment Tax, is available on the IRS web site ([www.irs.ustreas.gov](http://www.irs.ustreas.gov)) or from the address below:

Internal Revenue Service  
Eastern Area Distribution Center  
P.O. Box 85074  
Richmond, VA 23261-5074