



United States Department of State

# Family Member Employment and Training

A Publication of  
the Family Liaison Office (FLO)



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### Contact FLO:

Community Liaison Office Program: [FLOAskCLO@state.gov](mailto:FLOAskCLO@state.gov)

Education and Youth: [FLOAskEducation@state.gov](mailto:FLOAskEducation@state.gov)

eFLO: [eFLO@state.gov](mailto:eFLO@state.gov)

EPAP: [FLOAskEPAP@state.gov](mailto:FLOAskEPAP@state.gov)

Evacuation Support: [FLOAskEvacuations@state.gov](mailto:FLOAskEvacuations@state.gov)

Expeditious Naturalization: [FLOAskNaturalization@state.gov](mailto:FLOAskNaturalization@state.gov)

Family Member Employment: [FLOAskEmployment@state.gov](mailto:FLOAskEmployment@state.gov)

Family Member Training: [FLOAskTraining@state.gov](mailto:FLOAskTraining@state.gov)

FLO Global Webinars: [FLOGlobalWebinars@state.gov](mailto:FLOGlobalWebinars@state.gov)

Global Employment Initiative: [GEI@state.gov](mailto:GEI@state.gov)

Online and Print Resources: [FLOPublications@state.gov](mailto:FLOPublications@state.gov)

Support Services: [FLOAskSupportServices@state.gov](mailto:FLOAskSupportServices@state.gov)

The Network: [FLONetwork@state.gov](mailto:FLONetwork@state.gov)

Unaccompanied Tours Support: [FLOAskUT@state.gov](mailto:FLOAskUT@state.gov)

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## Introduction

**E**mployment opportunities for Foreign Service family members vary globally. Carrying one's career in a suitcase has always been a challenge for Foreign Service family members. Conducting professional networking in the global workplace takes time and a great deal of initiative.

Every few years, Foreign Service employees must choose or bid on overseas assignments from a list of worldwide vacancies. While many considerations come into play during the bidding process, the availability of overseas employment for family members is often a top priority.

For family members who want to pursue careers, the Foreign Service globe-trotting lifestyle presents challenges, as well as opportunities. Family members should research employment options during the bidding process, before the Foreign Service employee is assigned to a country. Understanding employment options within the embassy or consulate, as well as knowing the local employment climate, can help to keep expectations realistic and assist family members looking to apply their skills and talents.

The Family Liaison Office provides programs and services to support the full circle of family member employment both overseas (working for the U.S. government or outside the embassy or consulate) and upon return to the United States. While the U.S. government cannot guarantee employment, we strive to give family members the information and tools they need to make informed employment decisions.

# OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT



## Working Overseas for the U.S. Government

**W**ork opportunities for family members inside a U.S. embassy or consulate vary from post to post, depending on the number of agencies represented and the size of the U.S. presence in that country. Opportunities with the Department of State include positions in the following areas: Consular, Political, Public Diplomacy, Economic, Security, and Management. The Management area includes General Services, Human Resources, Financial Management, Information Management, and Community Liaison.

Positions can be clerical, administrative, technical, or research in nature. For example, Community Liaison Office (CLO) coordinators handle issues related to morale and quality of life within the embassy or consulate community, including welcoming and orientation, family member employment, education of Foreign Service youth, and crisis support.

FLO maintains the **Family Member Employment Report (FAMER)**, which offers a snapshot of the employment situation at post. The report, updated twice a year, provides information on positions currently held by family members and lists contacts to facilitate networking prior to arriving at post. Family members can obtain a copy of a post FAMER by asking the sponsoring employee to download it from the intranet or by sending an email to [FLOAskEmployment@state.gov](mailto:FLOAskEmployment@state.gov).

Opportunities may also be available with other federal agencies. Foreign Service family members have found employment with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), the Department of Justice (DOJ), and the Department of Defense (DOD), among others.

Family members applying for U.S. government positions at posts should be aware that a Post Employment Committee (PEC) is in place to ensure that hiring preferences are properly applied for family members and certain veterans. The Foreign Service Act specifies that Appointment Eligible Family Members (see page 16 for definition) receive hiring preference when competing for local hire positions. The CLO Coordinator sits on the committee as a non-voting member to advocate for fair and transparent family member employment policies and procedures.

Certain positions inside an embassy or consulate convey benefits such as annual and sick leave, retirement coverage under the Federal Employment Retirement System (FERS), health care

“Family member employment is critical to morale at post.” **FAMILY MEMBER**

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and life insurance coverage, and the opportunity to earn Non-competitive Eligibility (NCE). This eligibility can facilitate obtaining federal employment in the United States. Specific information on eligibility requirements for U.S. government positions overseas, the benefits conveyed, and the requirements for non-competitive status are available on FLO's Employment website:  
[www.state.gov/flo/employment](http://www.state.gov/flo/employment)

Most family member positions overseas require a **security clearance**. Family members should be prepared with details such as previous addresses and travel history in order to complete the clearance application promptly once a job is offered. For more information:  
[www.state.gov/m/ds/clearances](http://www.state.gov/m/ds/clearances)

## Overseas Employment Programs

**A**lthough the majority of U.S. government positions are advertised locally and filled at post, there are special employment programs that are advertised worldwide and are open to family members who are either assigned to or residing at post. The employment opportunities under these programs are open to adult family members who are on the travel orders of the assigned employee. In most instances, U.S. citizenship is also required because of the necessity of a security clearance.

**Expanded Professional Associates Program (EPAP)** – EPAP, coordinated by FLO, provides U.S. citizen Eligible Family Members serving overseas with a limited number of professional-level Foreign Service full-time positions in Economics, Management, Political, Public Diplomacy, Financial Management, General Services, Human Resources, Information Management, Office Management, and Medical areas. The pay grades run from

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FP-07 to FP-04. Details are available: [www.state.gov/flo/epap](http://www.state.gov/flo/epap) or contact [FLOAskEPAP@state.gov](mailto:FLOAskEPAP@state.gov).

**CA-AEFM Adjudicator Program** – The pilot Consular Affairs-Appointment Eligible Family Member (CA-AEFM) Adjudicator Program, coordinated by the Bureau of Consular Affairs, provides opportunities for AEFMs to fill entry-level CA positions at selected posts. Candidates must successfully pass the current Board of Examiners (BEX) assessment process used to qualify for a Consular Adjudicator position. Once certified, AEFMs can then apply for CA positions on a post-by-post basis. For questions, email [AEFM-CA-Questions@state.gov](mailto:AEFM-CA-Questions@state.gov). For more information: [www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c63205.htm](http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c63205.htm).

**Professional Associates (PA) Program** (also known as the Hard to Fill Exercise) – Eligible applicants can bid on positions that remain underbid. The program is managed by the State Department’s Office of Career Development and Assignments. For more information, visit FLO’s website [www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21619.htm](http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21619.htm) or email [HTFProfAssoc@state.gov](mailto:HTFProfAssoc@state.gov).

**Special Staffing at Certain Unaccompanied Posts** – In some instances, employees accept an assignment to an overseas post where family members would not be able to accompany them, referred to as an unaccompanied tour (UT). However, there are some UT posts that have positions in the embassy that would allow family members to join the assigned employees as working members of the mission. For more information on these limited opportunities: [www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c50055.htm](http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c50055.htm).

“Coming overseas to a different job market, different work culture and completely different way of searching for jobs, I relied heavily on the services offered by the Family Liaison Office.” **FAMILY MEMBER**



## Working Overseas Outside the Embassy or Consulate

**P**ursuing a specific career field when contemplating an international move requires preparation, networking, and creativity. Family members with advanced training, certification, and experience in a specialized field often seek work opportunities overseas outside the embassy or consulate. The availability of positions in a given career field will vary from country to country. Compensation may fall below U.S. standards and the obligation to pay local taxes is another factor to consider. While some family members find meaningful work in their chosen profession — law, health care, business or international consulting, public relations, accounting, teaching — flexibility and the willingness to work in areas outside of one’s career field have proven advantageous.

Bilateral work agreements and de facto work arrangements exist between the United States and more than 150 foreign countries, enabling family members of U.S. diplomats to work on the local economy in those countries. A bilateral work agreement is a treaty between the United States and the host country. A *de facto* work arrangement is based on reciprocity in those instances where a treaty does not exist but family members have been able to obtain a work permit. A list of current bilateral work agreements and de facto work arrangements can be found on FLO's website: [www.state.gov/flo/employment](http://www.state.gov/flo/employment).

There are countries where family members are not permitted to work as diplomatic spouses. In addition, local laws concerning certification and other barriers (knowledge of the local language or lack of job opportunities) may require family members to transfer skill sets into a new career field when they move.

Developing a “portable” career is one way to navigate international relocations and a changing international job market. **Freelance** activities among family members range from accounting to consulting to the performing arts. Family members also have the option of self-employment and should investigate host country regulations governing self-employment. FLO's comprehensive Self-Employment Guide can be found on the employment webpage.

“It’s often hard to predict when opportunities will arise. . . all that you can do to prepare yourself—to take advantage of those opportunities, to further your own experience, your own expertise, education—you should just seize, because one never knows.”

FORMER SECRETARY OF STATE

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON, JANUARY 2013.



Another option in today's economy is **telework**. Employers realize the costs involved in hiring and training new people. Foreign Service family members, who are already employed, should consider discussing with their current employer the advantage of continuing to work remotely.

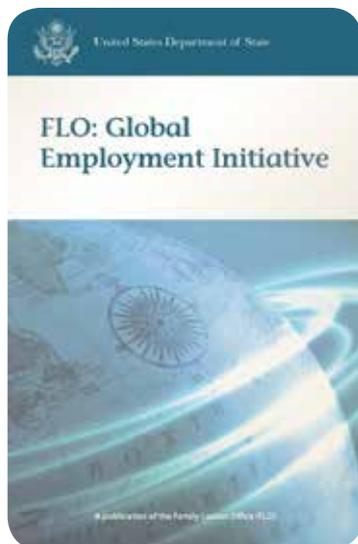
Those interested in this option can join the FLO *Telework Connection* LinkedIn group. It is important for family members who are seeking employment on the local economy or engaging in self-employment to obtain approval from post management prior to engaging in any form of local employment. Regulations regarding this notification and requirements can be found on FLO's employment webpage: [www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21564.htm](http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21564.htm).

## Global Employment Initiative (GEI) Program

Managed by FLO, GEI provides career coaching for Foreign Service family members. The program's Global Employment Advisors (GEAs) assist family members in exploring employment options for a mobile lifestyle.

GEI currently delivers in-country and regional services to over 200 posts. Some posts have GEAs on the premises, while others are visited by Regional GEAs and also receive virtual support via e-mail and phone contact.

GEAs provide job coaching sessions, training workshops, and career development services. They support the family member job search by providing resources, guidance, and facilitating skill development. They support family members' efforts to work on the local economy or inside the embassy. GEA services are offered free of charge and are available to all adult EFMs and MOHs under Chief of Mission. For more information, email: [GEI@state.gov](mailto:GEI@state.gov).



**“The GEI has provided me with responsive, top-notch advising and professional support during a challenging mid-career transition. It’s great to have a dedicated partner on my side!”** FAMILY MEMBER



## **Volunteering**

Many family members and employees volunteer in local communities overseas. Volunteering can be a strategic component of any globally mobile career plan, providing experience, new language skills as well as allowing exploration of new career directions. Reaching out to host country nationals also puts a face to American diplomacy and can help to build stronger global relationships.

The Secretary of State recognizes family member and employee volunteerism at an annual awards ceremony sponsored by the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW). For additional information on AAFSW, the Secretary of State Awards (SOSA), and the scope of family member and employee volunteer activities, see AAFSW's website:

[www.aafsw.org/awards-scholarships/sosa/sosa-project](http://www.aafsw.org/awards-scholarships/sosa/sosa-project)

## **FLO Professional Development Fellowships (PDF)**

FLO's PDF Program offers grants to family members to maintain, enhance, and develop their professional skills in those instances where they are not able to pursue their career paths overseas. The program provides grants of up to \$2,500 for activities, including, but not limited to, online coursework, maintaining professional licensure, obtaining certification, and conference participation. To date, FLO has awarded more than \$1.7 million in PDF grants to over 900 family members. This program is announced annually in early March and information is posted on FLO's website:

[www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21642.htm](http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21642.htm).

## RETURNING TO THE U.S.



**F**or family members returning to the D.C. area, FLO recommends the following resource:

***The Network*** – FLO encourages family members to subscribe to the listserv, *The Network*, which includes employment resources, job vacancies (including for those who have earned non-competitive eligibility), employment workshops, and training information for the Washington area. Family members may register by email: [FLONetwork@state.gov](mailto:FLONetwork@state.gov).

“Who knew? The support position I took overseas was not in my career field — but it counted as government service and helped me land the job I have now in Washington DC.” **FAMILY MEMBER**

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**Career Development Resource Center (CDRC)** – FLO refers Department of State family members to the CDRC for individual resume counseling services. The CDRC provides individual counseling services on an appointment-only basis. For more information, email: [FLOAskEmployment@state.gov](mailto:FLOAskEmployment@state.gov).

**FLO Global Webinars** - Learn more about FLO’s programs and services through its FLO Global Webinar series. Webinars cover topics such as family member employment programs and services and a host of other FLO initiatives and are designed to educate and inform communities overseas and at home. For links to past webinars, email: [FLOGlobalWebinars@state.gov](mailto:FLOGlobalWebinars@state.gov).



# TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES



## Opportunities at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI)

**Distance Learning** –Skillsoft is a government-wide distance learning online library that offers thousands of self-paced courses in business, information technology, leadership, and management. Funded through the Foreign Service Institute, these courses are available to Department of State family members on the Internet via the FSI Learn Center. Direct questions to the Distance Learning Coordinator, FSI Office of the Registrar: [FSIRegistrar@state.gov](mailto:FSIRegistrar@state.gov).

**Functional Training Courses\*** – The Department of State is authorized to provide functional training to family members of U.S. Government direct-hire personnel paneled for an overseas assignment. The functional training courses include Basic Consular (ConGen), Financial Management, General Services Operations, Overseas Facilities Management, Human Resource Management, Office Management, and IT virtual courses. These are the same instructor-led courses that Foreign Service Officers take to prepare for their specific duties. For more information: [www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21648.htm](http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21648.htm).



*\* Tuition waiver for non-Department of State EFMs must be approved by FSI before registration can be processed.*

Functional training for prospective overseas employment for family members is offered on a space available basis only. Completion of functional training does not guarantee EFMs positions at post, but may increase their employability. Each course has specific eligibility requirements and enrollment procedures. For additional information, email:

[FLOAskTraining@state.gov](mailto:FLOAskTraining@state.gov).

**Foreign Language Training\*** – FLO encourages all family members to acquire language skills of their host country. FSI offers instructor-led training in more than 70 languages. Department of State family members may enroll in classroom language training on a space available basis.

**FSI's Distance Language Learning Program\*** – offers 16 languages, accessible from anywhere with an Internet connection, and guided by mentors who are in contact on a weekly basis. Registration is through the employee's Career Development Officer. For more information, email: [OnlineLanguage@state.gov](mailto:OnlineLanguage@state.gov).

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**The Transition Center (TC)** –The TC at FSI offers a variety of courses specifically designed to help family members transition into the FS lifestyle. Among them are sessions geared to identify and enhance career opportunities. For additional information, including registration requirements, email the Training Division: [FSITCTraining@state.gov](mailto:FSITCTraining@state.gov). Visit FSI’s TC web page: [www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/fslstraining](http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/fslstraining).

*\*Non-Department of State personnel, after agency approval, must submit an SF-182 with funding information to FSI.*

There are a variety of training options available to family members. For questions about requirements and specific enrollment procedures, email [FLOAskTraining@state.gov](mailto:FLOAskTraining@state.gov).

## Other Training Options - Teaching Overseas

**Teaching Certification** – FAST TRAIN (The Foreign Affairs Spouse Teacher Training Program) began in 1990 as a collaboration between the Department of State’s Office of Overseas Schools, the State of Virginia Department of Education, and George Mason University to train Foreign Service family members to become qualified candidates for teaching positions in international schools. The program has expanded to include the general public but still maintains a formal relationship with the Office of Overseas Schools. For additional information: [www.fasttrain.gmu.edu](http://www.fasttrain.gmu.edu). For general information on teaching overseas: [www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21946.htm](http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21946.htm).



# GLOSSARY

## Family Member Definitions

### **EFM**

Eligible Family Member

Family members on the travel orders of a Foreign or Civil Service employee or uniformed service member permanently assigned at a post under Chief of Mission Authority. For employment purposes, EFMs are:

- Spouses, or
- Same-sex domestic partners, or
- Dependent children ages 18-21

EFMs must reside at the sponsoring employee's overseas post.

### **AEFM**

Appointment Eligible Family Member

Appointment Eligible Family Member: An EFM who is a U.S. Citizen. AEFMs can be hired on FMA or TEMP appointments for Department of State positions.

### **MOH**

Member of Household

Persons, other than legally recognized Eligible Family Members and domestic staff, who are not on travel orders, but who reside with an employee at post and are declared by the employee to the Chief of Mission. Examples of MOHs are non-dependent parents, adult children, siblings, and unmarried partners of the opposite sex, who reside at post with the employee.

## How are Family Members Hired?

### **FMA** Family Member Appointment

A maximum five-year federal appointment used by the Department of State to hire AEFMs overseas. An AEFM appointed on an FMA accrues USG service credit as well as retirement, Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), life insurance, and health benefits. An AEFM may also earn non-competitive eligibility which can help with securing Civil Service jobs in the U.S.

### **TEMP** Temporary Appointment

An up to one-year, time-limited appointment that counts as government service but does not carry retirement benefits. AEFMs accompanying a career Foreign or Civil Service employee are eligible to be hired on a TEMP appointment and can earn non-competitive eligibility after working 2,087 hours but do not earn leave or retirement benefits.

### **PSA** Personal Services Agreement

EFMs receiving a non-military USG annuity and/or those without U.S. citizenship and MOHs can be hired under a PSA, which does not confer retirement benefits or USG service credit. Family members hired on a PSA can earn annual and sick leave. MOHs hired on a PSA are paid on the American or local compensation plan (as appropriate for their employment status in the host country).

### **PSC** Personal Services Contract

The PSC is used by USAID and the Peace Corps. Like the PSA, the PSC is subject to government contracting authorities and does not confer retirement benefits or USG service credit.



**The Family Liaison Office**

Harry S Truman Building, Room 1239  
Department of State  
Washington, DC 20520

**Tel: (202) 647-1076 or (800) 440-0397**

Fax: (202) 647-1670

**[www.state.gov/flo](http://www.state.gov/flo)**

Click on Family Member Employment

Contact the Family Member Employment Team:

**[FLOAskEmployment@state.gov](mailto:FLOAskEmployment@state.gov)**

March 2016



**FLO**