

2017 PMF Application Guide

10 general steps that you should follow as you prepare, work on, and complete the PMF application

STEP 1 	Prepare Before You Start Assemble your resume, transcript (and/or alternative), and supporting documents as referenced under Application Tips.
STEP 2 	Check System Requirements Check your system prior to starting your application to ensure you meet the specified requirements. Various browser and system requirements can be found under Application Process.
STEP 3 	Create an Applicant User Account You can create an applicant user account by going to https://apply.pmf.gov to prepare for the PMF application. You may want to bookmark this website address. You do not need a USAJOBS account to apply.
STEP 4 	Review the Announcement From USAJOBS, enter "Residential Management Fellows" as the keywords to search for the announcement. The direct link to the announcement on USAJOBS can be found here: https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/ViewDetails/456296700 .
STEP 5 	Begin the Application Log into your applicant user account to fill out contact, demographics, and eligibility information; submit documents; submit your application; complete the essay; and, complete the on-line assessment. Some of these features are only available when the application is open.
STEP 6 	Submit Documentation A resume and transcript (and/or alternative) is required. You must also submit supporting documentation for claiming veterans' preference, Indian Preference, and/or reasonable accommodations (if applicable).
STEP 7 	Complete the Essay You must submit an essay as part of your application. Follow the instructions in the announcement.
STEP 8 	Complete the On-Line Assessment You must complete the on-line assessment as part of the application and assessment process. Additional information can be found under the Assessment Process.
STEP 9 	Application Review Ensure you have completed the entire application and assessment process. Follow the steps outlined in the announcement.
STEP 10 	Check Application Status Log into your applicant user account to check your application status.

The timeline for this cycle is as follows:

Friday, November 18, 2016 – Application for the PMF Class of 2017 opens via job announcement on USAJOBS

Thursday, December 1, 2016 – Application for the PMF Class of 2017 closes at 10:59 Central Standard Time (this is Chicago time)

Up to 4-6 weeks after announcement – Applicants will be notified of eligibility and the selection of finalists will be announced

Up to 2-4 weeks after finalists announced – Hiring event(s) for Class of 2017 Finalists



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Getting Started

- Use your personal email address, not your .edu email address
- Prepare your resume, transcript (and/or alternative), and any other supporting documentation (veterans' preference, Indian preference, and/or reasonable accommodations) now
 - *Many of you will encounter questions relating to your transcript.* The transcript must reflect the advanced degree used to qualify for the program; it is not necessary to submit a transcript for your undergraduate degree. Transcripts must be in English and legible. Any transcript submitted (official or unofficial is acceptable) must contain the following:
 1. Applicant first and last name
 2. College/University name
 3. Qualifying degree program (completed or pursuing)
 4. Date of degree conferred for recent graduates or anticipated for current graduate students
 - How do I get my official/unofficial transcript?
 1. Log on to my.uchicago.edu, click on “Academics” tab in upper left corner, then under that drop down window, hover your mouse over “Academic Records” and click on “Request Official Transcript.” Then, select the option to order an official eTranscript
 2. Should you have any questions about this or need further authentication, email your graduate program administrator or your program’s staff coordinator for help.
- Resume Tips
 - You may submit a resume in any format, but the file must not exceed 3MB. The resume must include your name, contact information, college/university name, and qualifying degree program - at the very least.
 - We encourage you to use the **USABJOBS Resume Builder** though, as it will walk you through the steps needed to create a federal job resume.
 - Do not include photos on your resume.
- No letters of recommendation are needed and any included will be discarded.
- No cover letters or writing samples are needed and those, too, will be discarded.



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Changes made to this year's application

There are a few significant changes this year. Namely, there is ***no longer an in-person assessment!*** In other words, you will not have to travel to Washington, D.C. for a day-long interview assessment. While this will save you money and the stress involved with that day-long assessment, it places 100% of the assessment process online and you MUST put 100% of your focus, energy, and dedication to getting this application exactly right. No pressure, right?

There is also a new system employed to help select the finalists – this is called the PMF Talent Management System (TMS). Please review UChicagoGRAD's guide to USAJOBS and creating federal jobs resumes, as this will help give you a sense of how to create a great federal jobs resume for this PMF application.

The PMF STEM Track Pilot has been retired this year, which means simply that Finalists with STEM-eligible degrees can obtain any PMF appointment (STEM or non-STEM). In the past, STEM Finalists could only obtain a STEM PMF appointment, which limited options.

There is also a Help Desk now to assist applicants with any technical issues. Should you have any questions during the application process, please direct those questions to the Help Desk (to the far right of the application site is a link for "Help"). You can email pmf@opm.gov or pmfapplication@opm.gov for help, too.



Relax, don't freak out about this. Read this PMF guide in full, take a deep breath (or two), and allow yourself time to complete this application!



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Tips for the Online Assessments

One of the key components of this year's application process is the online assessment of the following competencies:

- Problem Solving
- Interpersonal Skills
- Motivation to Serve
- Adaptability
- Integrity
- Oral/Written Communication

There are three assessments, which are timed and un-proctored. These assessments must be completed during the application process.

Three Parts:

1. **Situational Judgment Test:** Applicants indicate how they would respond to given situations
2. **Life Experience Assessment:** Applicants respond to questions involving work and education-related experiences
3. **Critical Thinking Skills:** Applicants read multiple scenarios and make logical conclusions based on given facts

You are scored on these three assessments and given a specific amount of time to complete each section. Be intentional about your answers.

There is also an essay portion of the assessment. This essay will be a general writing prompt. It will, obviously, be a way to assess your writing skills. But, it will also be a way for the PMF Program Office to discover more about you, your motivation to serve, your adaptability, and how you define integrity (the competencies above).

**REPEAT AFTER ME:
“I CAN DO THIS”**



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Tips for the Online Assessments

Part A: Situational Judgment - 54 items in 60 minutes

The Situational Judgment Assessment requires you to read through a series of scenarios relevant to PMF work. The questions place you in realistic situations that you are likely to encounter as a PMF. Through a series of multiple choice questions you will be asked to select an option based on how you would most likely respond or least likely respond in each situation. Questions in the Situational Judgment section draw primarily on your experiences in working with and relating to others in a work setting. In each of the questions in this section, you are asked to indicate how you would respond in a given situation. If you are not currently in a work group, you can answer the questions based on experiences you may have had in previous jobs or in school, social, athletic, or volunteer organizations.

Situational Judgment Sample Questions: Four sample questions are provided below to give you an idea of the type of questions you will encounter when completing the Situational Judgment Assessment. **Directions:** In each of the following situations, you are asked to indicate how you would respond. No special training or experience is required to answer these questions. Identify from the response options the one that best represents how you would handle the situation. Select the response that is closest to how you would actually handle the situation, not the response that you think others might select or the response that you think is expected.

Sample Question 1: You are a member of a project team in your office. During a project meeting a colleague gives you a task that you do not feel qualified or trained to handle. Which of the following actions are you most likely to take?

- Complete the task as best you can.
- Complain to your supervisor.
- Ask someone in the office who knows how to do the task to help you.
- Explain to the colleague that you do not feel qualified to work on the task and you would prefer that the task be given to someone else.

Sample Question 2: You are a member of a project team in your office. During a project meeting a colleague gives you a task that you do not feel qualified or trained to handle. Which of the following actions are you least likely to take?

- Complete the task as best you can.
- Complain to your supervisor.
- Ask someone in the office who knows how to do the task to help you.
- Explain to the colleague that you do not feel qualified to work on the task and you would prefer that the task be given to someone else.

Sample Question 3: One of your customers has arrived at your office and wishes to speak with your supervisor, who is not at her desk right now. The customer is frustrated because she has left several messages on your supervisor's voice-mail in the past week and has not received a call in return. You know that your supervisor is attending a meeting that will last for at least another hour. Which of the following actions are you most likely to take?

- Find out what the customer needs and interrupt the meeting.
- Find out what the customer needs and assure the caller that your supervisor will get the message.
- Tell the customer that your supervisor is not available.
- Ask the customer if someone else in the office can help her.

Sample Question 4: One of your customers has arrived at your office and wishes to speak with your supervisor, who is not at her desk right now. The customer is frustrated because she has left several messages on your supervisor's voice-mail in the past week and has not received a call in return. You know that your supervisor is attending a meeting that will last for at least another hour. Which of the following actions are you least likely to take?

- Find out what the customer needs and interrupt the meeting.
- Find out what the customer needs and assure the caller that your supervisor will get the message.
- Tell the customer that the manager is not available.
- Ask the customer if someone else in the office can help her.



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Tips for the Online Assessments

Part B: Life Experience Assessment – 40 items in 30 minutes

This section contains questions involving work- and education-related experiences. You will be instructed to select one answer from among the alternatives presented. Some questions will ask you to consider your experience in working with and relating to others in a work setting. If you are not currently employed then you will be instructed to answer questions based on experiences you may have had in previous jobs, or in your academic pursuits. No special training or experience is required to answer these questions. When completing this assessment, remember: Do not skip questions; it is in your best interest to answer every question. A response of “I don’t know” means that you would expect the other person not to know or to have no basis for making a judgment if asked to describe you. The term “peer” refers to co-workers, classmates, or other close associates. Please note that your responses are subject to verification and deliberate attempts to falsify information may be grounds for not being selected or for being dismissed after beginning work

Life Experience Sample Questions:

Two sample questions are provided below to give you an idea of the type of questions you will encounter when completing the Life Experience Assessment.

Sample Question 1:

In the past when I have given a speech or presentation, I was likely to have prepared ahead of time:

- much less than others did
- less than others did
- about the same as others did
- more than others did
- much more than others did

Sample Question 2:

When working as a member of a team, I prefer to:

- do less complex tasks
- keep a low profile
- always take the lead
- take on challenging tasks but not take the lead
- take the lead at times



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Tips for the Online Assessments

Part C: Critical Thinking Skills Assessment – 42 items in 50 minutes

The Critical Thinking Skills Assessment requires you to read through a series of scenarios relevant to PMF work and respond to a series of multiple-choice questions. Thinking skills, such as decision making, problem solving, and reasoning, are of critical importance for successful performance in PMF positions throughout the Federal Government. In this section of the Guide, you will read useful information about applying thinking skills on the job and doing your best on the Critical Thinking Skills Assessment. The questions in the Critical Thinking Skills Assessment are designed to measure your ability to understand complicated situations and to derive correct conclusions from them. The kind of thinking that these questions ask you to do is the kind of thinking that PMFs have to do when planning and implementing projects, dealing with issues that arise, and interacting with colleagues and agency leaders. The assessment asks you to make logical conclusions based on facts you are given about workplace situations. These conclusions need to be based only on the facts given about the situation. Therefore, answering correctly requires careful reading and focused thought about what information is given and what information is not given about the situation.

Critical Thinking Skills Sample Questions:

Three sample questions are provided in this Guide to assist you in preparing for the Critical Thinking Skills Assessment. The target situations included as part of these sample questions are similar to those found in the actual Critical Thinking Skills Assessment. Each situation has five questions. Read the situation carefully and then record your answer to each question. Compare your answers to the answers and explanations that we have provided for you below. You will receive the most benefit from the sample questions if you first record your answers before examining the answers and explanations.

In the Critical Thinking Skills Assessment, you are asked to indicate whether each conclusion is true or false or whether you have insufficient information to make a determination. Selecting the “insufficient information” response is not a sign that you are unable either to be a PMF, to make critical decisions, or to make decisions under fire. Choosing “insufficient information” means that you recognize that you would need to gather more information to know for sure if the conclusion is true or false. These types of situations occur frequently in real life. For example, you often have insufficient information to make a decision when you must first speak with your boss, check a database, call another agency, or check with colleagues before you make an informed decision.



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Sample Situation 1: The following passage describes a set of facts. The passage is followed by five conclusions. Read the passage and then evaluate each conclusion against the following three options:

- A) true, which means that you can infer the conclusion from the facts given
- B) false, which means that the conclusion cannot be true given the facts
- C) insufficient information, which means that there is insufficient information for you to determine whether the conclusion is true or false.

Federal Agency X is responsible for monitoring unfair employment practices across the Federal Government. During the second week of March, there was a marked increase in reported cases of unfair employment practices in Federal Agencies. The second week alone accounted for 75% of the entire reported total of 120 unfair employment practices cases that month. There was also a dramatic increase in the number of investigations resulting in legal action. In fact, for the preceding six months, whenever there had been an increase in reported cases of unfair employment practices, there had also been an increase in the number of employment applications submitted and an increase in the number of investigations resulting in legal action. However, during the first week of April, when over 50% of the month's 180 unfair employment practices cases occurred, there were only a few reported investigations resulting in legal action.

Situation 1 Questions:

- 1) For the preceding six months, whenever there had been a decrease in reported unfair employment practices cases, there has also been a decrease in the number of employment applications submitted and in investigations resulting in legal action.
- 2) In May, there will be more than 180 unfair employment practices cases across the Federal Government.
- 3) During the second week of March, most of the unfair employment practices cases for the month occurred.
- 4) Reported cases of unfair employment practices increased throughout the month of March.
- 5) Past experience has shown that whenever there has been an increase in investigations resulting in legal action, there has also been an increase in unfair employment practices cases.

Sample Situation 2: The following passage describes a set of facts. The passage is followed by five conclusions. Read the passage and then evaluate each conclusion against the following three options:

- A) true, which means that you can infer the conclusion from the facts given
- B) false, which means that the conclusion cannot be true given the facts
- C) insufficient information, which means that there is insufficient information for you to determine whether the conclusion is true or false.

Federal Agency Y is responsible for printing public information brochures. Whenever there is a sustained increase in print jobs during the evening shift, Agency Y will activate its Emergency Overflow Team. If an Emergency Overflow Team is activated, two employees from the day shift and two employees from the midnight shift will be assigned to a 5 p.m. to 1 a.m. shift. Their tour of duty will start at the beginning of the next pay period. These employees will be rotated back to their regularly assigned shift after the pay period is over. All volunteers for this team must contact the Supervisor in Charge (SIC) before the schedules are made for the following pay period. Because many employees on the day shift are committed to community outreach projects for the next pay period, the SIC expects that most volunteers for the first pay period after an Emergency Overflow Team is activated will be from the midnight shift. Most employees, regardless of their normal shift, prefer to work on these Emergency Overflow Teams when they do not conflict with other commitments.

Situation 2 Questions:

- 6) There are probably some employees on the day shift who would like to volunteer for the Emergency Overflow Team for the pay period immediately following its implementation but do not.
- 7) If Agency Y has not activated an Emergency Overflow Team, then there has been no sustained increase in print jobs during the evening shift.
- 8) There will be some employees from the day shift who are available to volunteer for the Emergency Overflow Team for the pay period immediately following its activation.
- 9) When an Emergency Overflow Team is activated, all employees will probably contact the SIC before the beginning of the next pay period.
- 10) The SIC at Agency Y expects that most of the volunteers for the Emergency Overflow Team for the pay period immediately following its activation will be from the day shift.



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Sample Situation 3: The following passage describes a set of facts. The passage is followed by five conclusions. Read the passage and then evaluate each conclusion against the following three options: A) true, which means that you can infer the conclusion from the facts given B) false, which means that the conclusion cannot be true given the facts C) insufficient information, which means that there is insufficient information for you to determine whether the conclusion is true or false.

In Unit Z, the supervisor is responsible for scheduling progress reviews for all 22 of her employees. The employees work in shifts. To complete all reviews without depleting staff resources during the 4 p.m. shift, she will schedule all reviews to start between the hours of 8 a.m. and 2 p.m. while employees are on the day shift. For the next three months, half of the employees will be available for appointments during these hours. Three employees, Ms. Smith, Ms. Ruiz, and Mr. Jones are currently on special assignments that will last for the next three months and will not be available during that time. In Unit Z, an employee must be on assigned regular duty in order to be scheduled for a progress review. The supervisor has been able to schedule all progress reviews to be completed within six months.

Situation 3 Questions:

- 11) At least fourteen employees are not available to be scheduled for progress reviews during the next three months.
- 12) Ms. Smith, Ms. Ruiz, and Mr. Jones are not scheduled to work the day shift at any time during the three months after they have returned to regular duty in Unit Z.
- 13) One half of the employees in Unit Z are not currently assigned to the day shift.
- 14) All 22 employees in Unit Z will be on assigned regular duty at some point during the next six months.
- 15) It is not true that some reviews are scheduled to start before 8 a.m. or after 2 p.m.

Analysis of Critical Thinking Skills Sample Situations

Situation 1

1. Correct Answer: C (Insufficient Information) The paragraph does not tell us about what happens when there has been a decrease in reported cases of unfair employment practices. Therefore, the statement that there has also been a decrease in the number of employment applications submitted and in the number of investigations resulting in legal action whenever there has been a decrease in reported cases of unfair employment practices cannot be evaluated. Question 1 should be answered "C (Insufficient Information)" because there is insufficient information available to judge this statement as true or false.
2. Correct Answer: C (Insufficient Information) The second sentence tells us that there were 120 unfair employment practices cases in March and the fifth sentence tells us that there were 180 unfair employment practices cases in April. However, no information is provided about unfair employment practices cases in May. It is not possible to determine from the information provided that the unfair employment practices cases in May will be more than those in April. Question 2 states that there will be more than 180 unfair employment practices cases in May. Since no information is provided about unfair employment practices cases in May, there is insufficient information to decide if question 2 is true or false.
3. Correct Answer: A (True) The first two sentences tell us that 75% of the 120 unfair employment practices cases reported in March were reported during the second week of March. Question 3 states that most of the unfair employment practices cases for the month occurred during the second week. Since 75% is more than 50%, it is true that most of the cases occurred during the second week.
4. Correct Answer: B (False) The second sentence tells us that 75% of the reported cases of unfair employment practices in March occurred during the second week. Since more than half of the cases occurred during the first half of the month, it is not possible for the unfair employment practices cases to have increased throughout the month of March. Since this is not possible, question 4 is false.
5. Correct Answer: C (Insufficient Information) The fourth sentence tells us that, in the preceding six months, whenever there has been an increase in reported cases of unfair employment practices, there had also been an increase in the number of employment applications submitted and an increase in the number of investigations resulting in legal action. Question 5 states that whenever there has been an increase in the number of investigations resulting in legal action, there has also been an increase in reported cases of unfair employment practices. The fourth sentence tells us about all instances in the past six months of reported increases in unfair employment practices cases, but only tells us about investigations resulting in legal action when there was a reported increase in cases of unfair employment practices. It is possible that there are instances of increased investigations resulting in legal action when there was no corresponding increase in reported cases of unfair employment practices. Therefore, there is insufficient information to draw the conclusion given in question 5.



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Situation 2 Analysis

6. Correct Answer: A (True) Sentence 6 tells us that many employees on the day shift are committed to community outreach projects for the next pay period. Sentence 7 tells us that most employees prefer to work on these Emergency Overflow Teams when they do not conflict with other commitments. Since many employees on the day shift do have other commitments for the next pay period, it is likely that there are some employees who would like to volunteer for the Emergency Overflow Team but do not. Question 6 states that there are probably some employees on the day shift who would like to volunteer for the Emergency Overflow Team for the next pay period but do not. Since this is true, question 6 is true.

7. Correct Answer: A (True) The first sentence tells us that whenever there is a sustained increase in print jobs during the evening shift, Agency Y will activate its Emergency Overflow Team. This means that if Agency Y has not activated its Emergency Overflow Team, then there has not been a sustained increase in print jobs during the evening shift. Question 7 states this conclusion and so question 7 is true.

8. Correct Answer: C (Insufficient Information) Sentence 6 tells us that many employees on the day shift are committed to community outreach projects. It is also possible that other factors could make an employee unable to volunteer to work on the Emergency Overflow Team that are not mentioned in the paragraph (such as scheduled annual leave, for example). This means that from the information given in the paragraph, we do not know if there are any employees on the day shift who can volunteer to work on the Emergency Overflow Team. Question 13 states that there will be some employees from the day shift who are available to volunteer for the Emergency Overflow Team. We cannot determine whether this statement is true, and so question 13 should be answered insufficient information.

9. Correct Answer: B (False) The fifth sentence tells us that all volunteers for the team must contact the SIC. Sentence 6 tells us that many employees on the day shift are committed to community outreach projects for the next pay period and would probably not be able to volunteer. Question 9 states that all employees will probably contact the SIC before the beginning of the next pay period. Since only employees who are volunteering would contact the SIC, and probably not all employees would volunteer because of other commitments, question 9 is false.

10. Correct Answer: B (False) The sixth sentence tells us that the SIC expects most volunteers for the Emergency Overflow Team to be from the midnight shift. Question 10 states that the SIC expects most volunteers for the Emergency Overflow Team will be from the day shift. Since this is not true, question 10 is false.

Situation 3 Analysis

11. Correct Answer: B (False) The first sentence tells us that there are 22 employees in Unit Z and the third sentence tells us that half of the employees will be available for appointments during the next three months. This means that 11 employees are available and 11 employees are not available for appointments during the next three months. Question 16 states that at least fourteen employees are not available for appointments during the next three months. Since this is not true, question 11 is false.

12. Correct Answer: B (False) Sentence 2 tells us that all reviews will be scheduled during the day shift. Sentence 5 tells us that an employee must be on assigned regular duty in order to be scheduled for a progress review. Taken together, these statements mean that Ms. Smith, Ms. Ruiz, and Mr. Jones are not available for a review in the next three months. Sentence 6 tells us that all reviews were scheduled in the next six months. This means that inspectors Smith, Ruiz, and Jones must be scheduled to work the day shift some time during the three months after they return to regular duty. Question 12 states that employees Smith, Ruiz, and Jones are not scheduled to work the day shift any time during the three months after they return to regular duty. This must be false because, if it were true, then Smith, Ruiz, and Jones could not have been scheduled for progress reviews during the three months after they returned to regular duty.

13. Correct Answer: C (Insufficient Information) The second sentence tells us that all reviews will be scheduled on the day shift. The first sentence tells us that there are 22 employees and the third sentence tells us that half of the employees will be available for appointments during the next three months. This means that 11 employees are or will be on the day shift during the next three months. We are not given information about how many employees are currently on the day shift. Question 13 states that one half (11) of the employees are not currently assigned to the day shift. Since we cannot know this from the paragraph, there is insufficient information to conclude if question 13 is true or false.

14. Correct Answer: A (True) Sentence 5 tells us that all reviews will be scheduled while employees are on assigned regular duty. Sentence 6 tells us that all of the employees were scheduled for reviews within six months. Therefore, all employees will be on assigned regular duty during the next six months. Since question 14 states that all employees will be on assigned regular duty at some point during the next six months, question 19 is true.

15. Correct Answer: A (True) Sentence 2 tells us that all reviews will be scheduled to start between the hours of 8 a.m. and 2 p.m. Since all of the reviews will be scheduled between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m., it cannot be the case that any of the reviews are before 8 a.m. or after 2 p.m. Since question 15 states that it is not the case that some reviews are scheduled to start before 8 a.m. or after 2 p.m., question 15 is true.



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A few final tips about the Critical Thinking Skills Assessment:

- Do NOT use any outside factual information to reach your conclusion. Work exclusively with the information provided.
 - If you run out of time, guess. No points are deducted for incorrect responses.
 - Ignore any patterns of A's, B's, or C's on your answer sheet. These correct answer positions are chosen randomly and there is no way to improve your chances by guessing based on an answer sheet pattern.

A few final words on the essay:

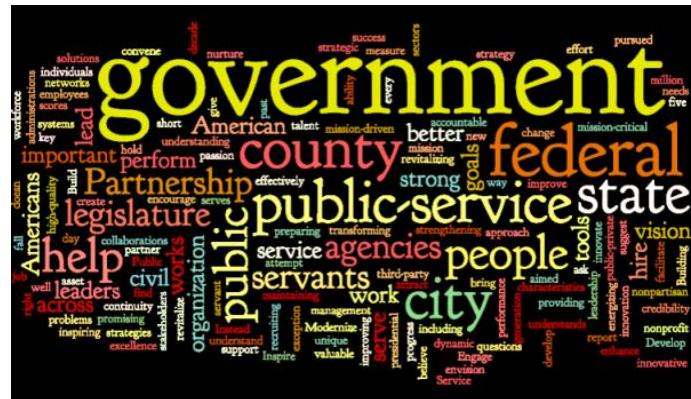
The essay portion will ask you about your accomplishments and experiences. You must answer the essay question in order to submit your application. The essay response must be a minimum of 2,000 characters and no more than 3,000 characters, including punctuation and spaces.

Please double-check your essay for spelling and grammar.

Keep in the mind the essay must be entered in one session.

There are many resources available online to help you prepare for the PMF application; however, we recommend sticking to the official PMF.gov resources – of which there are too many to list. Please explore the website in full, read all preparation materials, and practice the assessment questions provided here and on the PMF website.

Do not wait until the last day to begin this process. The online assessments will take up to 2 hours to complete and that is just one component of the application.



Should you have any further questions, please direct them to Tyler Blackwell, UChicagoGRAD Special Consultant to the Harris School and PMF Alumnus, at tblackwell@uchicago.edu