

Navigating a Career Shift: A Guide for Federal Health Workers

Advice From Elyse Zlotnikov, MHCI, SHRM-CP, Director of Talent Acquisition at New York-Presbyterian Hospital and a 2024 graduate of Penn's Master of Health Care Innovation (MHCI) program.

Whether it's a round of layoffs prompting the search for new opportunities or simply a desire for growth and fresh challenges, leaping to that next role requires strategy, especially when moving from the federal hiring process, which differs from the private sector.

Career builders have agency in their transition process. With the right approach, federal employees can successfully pivot to new industries, companies, or roles by leveraging their skills, refining their professional narrative, and embracing new opportunities.

Here are key strategies to help you navigate this shift with confidence.



Refresh Your Résumé

HIGHLIGHT WHAT ENERGIZES YOU: Start by reflecting on your preferences and emphasize experiences and achievements that align with the work you want to do next.

KEEP IT CONCISE: Resumes outside of the federal sector are shorter. Aim for a two-page resume that highlights impact over duties.

TRANSLATE YOUR SKILLS: Use industry-specific keywords from job descriptions you're targeting so you can learn the language of your target position.



Prepare to Pitch Yourself

BUILD A STRONG ELEVATOR PITCH: Clearly and concisely communicate what you do and what you're seeking. AI tools like ChatGPT can help refine your pitch.

PRACTICE BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW RESPONSES: Use the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result) to structure responses that highlight transferable skills.

BE READY FOR FAST-MOVING PROCESSES: Unlike in the federal sector, private-sector interviews often conclude within weeks so prepare to move quickly.



Find Stepping Stones to Your Next Role

CONSIDER A BRIDGE JOB: Start in a role similar to your federal position but in a new organization or industry, then transition internally.

TAKE ON PROJECTS: Showcase your skills by leading initiatives or volunteering in relevant spaces to gain relevant experience.

KNOW YOUR WORTH: Salaries, benefits, and perks are more flexible in the private sector so be prepared to negotiate.

This shift may have been unexpected, but with the right approach, your federal experience can translate into a fulfilling new career.

Follow the **Penn Master of Health Care Innovation LinkedIn page** for more advice and to grow your network.

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/penn-master-of-health-care-innovation-mhci/>

Learn more: [ImprovingHealthCare.net](https://www.improvinghealthcare.net)



Search LinkedIn job postings for roles that interest you, and tailor your resume using the keywords in those descriptions.



You'll never know who you'll meet so having an elevator pitch ready is helpful while you network with industry professionals, attend events, or leverage LinkedIn to expand your reach.



If your experience is deeply specialized in government work, consider how you can reposition it as a valuable asset in a new context.



Visit the Penn Master of Health Care Innovation website to learn more about this degree.

