PMF PRESIDENTIAL MANAGEMENT FELLOWS PROGRAM
U.S. OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program 2014 Assessment Preparation Guide

Revision History

Revision Date	Revision Summary
09-25-2013, 5:00pm (Eastern Time)	• Initial release
09-30-2013, 4:50pm (Eastern Time)	• Minor edits to include requests for reasonable accommodation and OPM's Alert Mobile App for monitoring changes in Operating Status
11-22-2013, Noon (Eastern Time)	• Added additional information regarding the In-Person Assessments, a Coffee Chat for Semi-Finalists, scheduling information, and inclement weather
12-20-2013, 4:15pm (Eastern Time)	• Minor edits as a result of the Semi-Finalists' Coffee Chat

Introduction

Congratulations on deciding to apply to the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program. This *Assessment Preparation Guide* ("Guide") will help you prepare for the rigorous assessment process used by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to select a diverse PMF candidate pool. This guide is specific to the 2014 PMF Program assessment process and will familiarize you with its key features so that you know what to expect and are prepared to do your best.

This year the PMF Program will pilot a new track featuring Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). This guide includes the specific aspects of the assessment process for the STEM track. New and returning applicants are recommended to review the Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA) and the program requirements in their entirety when deciding to which track you will apply. Throughout this guide the new STEM pilot will be referred to as the PMF STEM track.

You are highly encouraged to thoroughly review this Guide and refer to it as you complete the assessment process. This Guide is subject to change and any updates will be posted to the "Become a PMF\Assessment Process" section on the PMF website at www.pmf.gov. Please review the "quick facts" below to further assist you during this process.

There are two parts to the assessment:

- Phase One is an on-line assessment that all applicants must complete during the application process,
- Phase Two is a half-day, in-person assessment for Semi-Finalists selected from the total applicant pool

Once a Finalist is hired by a Federal agency, they officially become a Presidential Management Fellow (PMF; Fellow), joining an elite corps of the future leaders in public service.

NOTE: Only selected Finalists who applied to the PMF STEM track are eligible for hire by Federal agencies into designated PMF STEM track positions only.

Key Features of Phase One:

The on-line assessment includes three components:

1. A video-based situational judgment assessment;
2. A questionnaire designed to assess specific work styles and work-related characteristics required for success and fit in the PMF Program; and,

3. 3 essay questions that are collected during the application process, but factored into the in-person assessment.

The on-line assessment is administered in an un-proctored environment and is *not* timed. The on-line assessment provides a screening process on job-related criteria and allows OPM to identify Semi-Finalists to participate in the in-person assessment.

Key Features of Phase Two:

The in-person assessment is a half-day immersion experience that puts Semi-Finalists through a series of group and individual exercises designed to simulate "the day in the life" of a PMF. The in-person assessment includes three components:

1. Group exercise,
2. Behavioral interview, and
3. Written exercise. (To be completed on a computer).

Semi-Finalists will be timed, observed, and evaluated by a panel of assessors in each in-person exercise.

Both phases of the assessment process are designed to uncover evidence of the following competencies that are critical to success on the job across all PMF occupations:

1. **Adaptability** - Learns quickly and readily adapts to changing circumstances and unexpected events; manages self effectively under pressure; aware of strengths and development needs; and, proactive in learning and self-development.

2. **Personal Accountability** - Behaves in an honest, fair, and ethical manner; holds self accountable for high quality, timely, and cost effective results; and, takes responsibility and learns from mistakes.

3. **Motivation to Serve** - Demonstrates initiative, commitment, and effort in working to serve the public; perseveres in the face of challenges and measures success by accomplishments, not status; and, demonstrates humility and respect for co-workers.

4. **Problem Solving** - Identifies problems; determines accuracy and relevance of information; and, uses sound judgment to generate and evaluate alternatives, and to make recommendations.

5. **Interpersonal Skills** - Shows understanding, friendliness, courtesy, tact, empathy, concern, and politeness to others; develops and maintains effective relationships with others; may include effectively dealing with individuals who are difficult, hostile, or distressed; relates well to people from varied backgrounds and different situations; and, is sensitive to cultural diversity, race, gender, disabilities, and other individual differences.

6. **Oral Communication** - Communicates information to individuals or groups effectively, taking into account the audience and nature of the information (for example, technical, sensitive, controversial); makes clear and convincing oral presentations; and, listens to others, attends to nonverbal cues and responds appropriately.

7. **Written Communication** - Recognizes or uses correct English grammar, punctuation, and spelling; expresses information (for example, facts, ideas, or messages) in a succinct and organized manner; and, produces written information, which may include technical material that is appropriate for the intended audience.

The PMF Program is deeply committed to building a fellowship that reflects the Nation's diverse population. The next section of the guide will walk applicants through the process in which to request reasonable accommodation(s).

NOTE: Current PMF Class of 2013 Finalists who choose to reapply to the PMF Program for the Class of 2014, if you initiate an application and the on-line assessment, you will forfeit your standing as a current Finalist (5 CFR 362.403).

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS:

Applicants with disabilities may request reasonable accommodations for either phase of the assessment process when applying to the PMF Program. The PMF Program Office will review each request during the application process and contact you directly to adjudicate your request. Remember that the on-line assessment is un-proctored and not timed, so requests for additional time are not necessary. During the application process, applicants are prompted on whether or not a reasonable accommodation is needed. At this time applicants will request a reasonable accommodation for the on-line and in-person phases of the application. If the applicant makes a request for the on-line assessment, he/she is instructed to not participate in the on-line assessment until the PMF Program Office can adjudicate their request; however, the applicant may continue with the rest of their application as long as he/she does not submit their final application until completing the on-line assessment. If an applicant makes such a request, the application system will prompt him/her to write a brief description of the accommodation needed and upload supporting documentation.

Do You Need a Reasonable Accommodation for the On-Line Assessment?

The following accommodations are already incorporated into the on-line assessment:

- Time adjustments: The assessments are untimed and can be completed at your own pace.
- Modified computer equipment: The assessments are un-proctored, meaning you do not need to take them at a certain location or at a certain time. You can complete the assessments using your personal computer, taking advantage of your own assistive technology.
- Sign language interpreter: The videos shown during the on-line assessment are closed captioned.
- Reader: All the test items can be “read aloud” following the instructions provided and using your computer speakers.
- Magnification or low-vision aids: The assessments are completed using your personal computer, allowing you to take advantage of your own assistive technology for this purpose.

Documentation

STEP 1: Under the “Documents” section of the application, the applicant must submit all supporting documentation for any such requests;

STEP 2: Supporting documentation should include: An evaluation of the nature and impact of your claimed disability and how the disability would affect performance during the assessment process (i.e., the specific tasks or functions affected by the disability); the specific assessment accommodation being requested; and,

STEP 3: Documentation from a qualified professional (e.g., medical doctor, rehabilitation counselor) who has training and experience related to the disability. **Your failure to provide supporting documentation may result in a delay or the inability to grant your request.**

Reasonable accommodations are provided to applicants with disabilities where appropriate, as qualified under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, or the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. Semi-Finalists requesting an accommodation for the in-person assessment will be provided additional information on scheduling their in-person assessment. Please see additional information under the “Become a PMF\Eligibility\Equal Opportunity Employment” section of the PMF website at www.pmf.gov.

We are delighted that you are interested in being appointed into the Federal Government as a Presidential Management Fellow. The opportunities available to PMFs are as extraordinary as are the challenges facing our

Nation today. The assessment process you are about to go through is rigorous, demanding, and highly competitive, helping OPM find top talent with strong management potential for this elite program. We wish you well in the assessment process and hope to see you on the other side!

Phase One: On-Line Assessment

The on-line assessment consists of three parts: Situational Judgment Test, Questionnaire, and Essay Questions. Each component of the on-line assessment is administered in an un-proctored environment and is *not* timed.

Part I: Situational Judgment Assessment

In this section of the on-line assessment, you will watch a series of videos that reflect situations found in a typical office environment that illustrate interpersonal scenarios PMFs could encounter on the job. For each scenario, you will be asked to choose **the most effective** course of action *and* **the least effective** course of action out of four possible courses of action for that particular scenario. You should choose a particular course of action based on the experiences you may have had in your current or previous jobs, in school, or in social, athletic, or volunteer organizations. You should choose the course of action you consider the best for a particular scenario AFTER watching the video and reading through the four courses of action.

We highly recommend you start and finish this portion of the on-line assessment in one sitting. However, once you start this portion of the on-line assessment you may pause during this portion and return later to complete.

TIP: For each scenario, select the course of action you consider the best, not the course of action you think others might select, or the course of action you think is expected of you.

PROCESS: The videos can be viewed in closed captioning by clicking on the CLOSED CAPTIONING button on ***each*** video located below the screen.

Part II: Questionnaire

The questionnaire is designed to assess the competencies required for success in professional, managerial, and leadership roles. It is based upon extensive research exploring the skills required to be successful in today's economy and business climate, and so is uniquely well suited for PMF candidates. In this section of the on-line assessment, you will be presented with short behavioral statements that ask about your interests and work preferences. You will be asked to rate each behavioral statement on a five-point scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*. Read each statement carefully, decide which of the five possible responses most accurately describes you, and then click on that response.

Part III: Essay Questions

During the essay portion of the application process, four essay questions will be provided, but you will answer three essay questions about your accomplishments and experiences. All applicants will answer the first two questions. Applicants interested in the PMF STEM track will insert "N/A" in question number three and answer question number four. All other applicants are asked to answer question number three and insert "N/A" in question number four, which is specific to the PMF STEM track. The essay questions will be factored into the in-person assessment process.

The essays are not timed; however, applicants must complete their application, on-line assessment, and the essays prior to the closing of the announcement.

Applicants may use a word processor to draft their responses and then cut-and-paste their responses into the text boxes provided. When doing so, please review your essays for formatting and spacing. You CANNOT answer one essay and later come back to answer the remaining two. All essays must be answered in one session. Essays must be a minimum of 2,000 characters and no more than 5,000 characters each.

A few notes to keep in mind during the on-line assessment process:

- When reading the questions on the assessments, you may wonder how they are related to your potential as a PMF. We know from extensive research that these characteristics are essential to success in the PMF Program, which is why they are measured during the selection process.

- Do not get hung up on one or two questions – it is not the individual items that are important, it is the whole person represented by measured characteristics that the assessment evaluates.

- When reading the questions on the assessments, you may not be able to tell what characteristics they are measuring, which is by design to discourage applicants from guessing what the desired response is versus answering according to their personal characteristics; this ensures a person cannot "fake good" on the assessment. Also, some of the questions may be related to multiple characteristics.

    - "Fake good" means that you should not respond in such a way as to try to "fake" the system, but rather respond in the way you would actually respond to the situation presented.

- It is important that you are candid and honest in your responses to all assessment questions. Attempts to distort your answers or try to make a positive impression by answering in what you think is the "best" way are likely to lead to invalid or inconsistent responses.

- It is best to complete the entire on-line assessment in one sitting.

- A large percentage of applicants tend to wait until the closing deadline to complete their application and on-line assessment. Applicants are encouraged to complete and apply early.

General Assessment-Taking Tips

1. Allow yourself plenty of time. Do not wait until the last few hours to take the on-line assessment as it will take between 1 and 2 hours to complete in addition to any time needed to complete the rest of your application and essays.
2. Get a good night's sleep before you participate in any portion of the assessment process.
3. Eat a light, nutritious meal to increase your energy level.
4. Read all instructions carefully before beginning.
5. Review the system requirements below.
6. For each question, read the entire question and all response options carefully before choosing an answer.
7. Ensure you can access the Internet from a distraction-free environment.
8. Turn on the speakers on your computer or use headphones before you begin the assessment.
9. Try to complete the on-line assessment in one sitting. However, if you have to stop and come back, your previous answers will be saved.
10. The on-line assessment requires thoughtful consideration, and it is important for you to complete it during a time in which you can give it your full attention and effort.

System Requirements for the On-Line Assessment

Please check your computer for the following requirements BEFORE you begin the on-line assessment. These settings may be different than the system requirements needed to complete your application. System and browser requirements for the application process can be found under the "Become a PMF\Application Process" (http://www.pmf.gov/become-a-pmf/application-process.aspx) section on the PMF website at www.pmf.gov.

Operating System

We highly recommend that you complete the on-line assessment on one of the following **Windows-based** operating systems:

- ✓ Windows XP Service Pack 2 (SP2)
- ✓ Windows XP Service Pack 3 (SP3)
- ✓ Windows Server 2003 Service Pack 2 (SP2)
- ✓ Windows Server 2003 R2
- ✓ Windows Vista
- ✓ Windows 7
- ✓ Windows Server 2008

The on-line assessment is **not** supported on the following Windows-based operating systems:

- ✓ Any version prior to Windows XP Service Pack 2 (released in August 2004)
- ✓ Windows 2003 (prior to Service Pack 2 or R2) (released in March 2007)

The on-line assessment is **not** supported on any mobile devices, such as hand-held devices (e.g., devices with touch screen input).

NOTE: The Safari browser is not fully compatible because it did not pass our tests for proper functionality. The same applies for many smart phone and tablet applications.

The on-line assessment can be completed on a **dual boot Mac machine**, if the assessment is completed in a Windows environment (virtual machine) using **Internet Explorer version 7 (or higher).** If you attempt to complete the assessment on any other browser, including **Internet Explorer version 6 (or higher), AOL, or Firefox**, you may experience technical difficulties. To check which version you are using, click the **Help** button on your Internet Explorer menu bar and select **About Internet Explorer**.

Monitor Size/Screen Resolution

The on-line assessment is best viewed on a **17"** monitor with a screen resolution of **1024 x 768 pixels or higher.** To check your screen resolution, right click anywhere on your desktop, click on **Properties**, and select the **Settings** tab. If using Windows 7, right click anywhere on your desktop and click on Screen resolution. If the screen resolution is smaller than 1024 x 768 pixels, increase the resolution and then click OK.

Internet Explorer Settings

The following settings in Internet Explorer should be checked PRIOR TO completing the on-line assessment.

TIP: *If you need to change any of these settings, you will want to make note of the original settings so you can change them back to your preferred settings after you finish the on-line assessment.*

- ✓ **Active Scripting (JavaScript)** must be enabled. To confirm this setting, click on **Tools** on your Internet Explorer menu bar, click on **Internet Options**, select the **Security** tab, click on the **Custom level** button, and scroll to **Scripting**, select **Enable** for **Active Scripting,** and then click **OK**.

- ✓ **ActiveX Controls** must be enabled. To confirm this setting, click on **Tools** on your Internet Explorer menu bar, click on **Internet Options**, select the **Security** tab, click on the **Custom level** button, scroll to **Internet ActiveX Controls and Plugins,** select **Enable** for **Run ActiveX Controls and Plugins** and **Script ActiveX Controls Marked Safe for Scripting,** then click **OK**.

- ✓ **Cookies** must be enabled. To confirm this setting, click on **Tools** on your Internet Explorer menu bar, select **Internet Options**, click on the **Privacy** tab, click on the **Advanced** button, check the **Override automatic cookie handling** box *and* the **Always allow session cookies** box, then click **OK**.
  **Please Note: Cookies are used by the on-line assessment site, but will not be stored on your computer. They will be deleted when you finish your on-line assessment.*

- ✓ **SSL encryption** must be enabled. To confirm this setting, click on **Tools** on your Internet Explorer menu bar, click **Internet Options**, select the **Advanced** tab, scroll to the **Security** section, make sure the **Use SSL 3.0** *and* **Use TLS 1.0** options are checked, then click **OK**.

- ✓ **Your Internet browser text display size** must be set to **Medium** or **Smaller**. To confirm this setting, click on **View** on your Internet Explorer menu bar, point to **Text Size**, and select either **Medium** or **Smaller**.

- ✓ Your **Zoom Level** should be set at **100%**. To confirm this setting, click on the zoom feature in the lower right hand corner of your Internet Explorer window and select **100%**.
  **Please Note: If you have any difficulties viewing the "Start" or "Continue" buttons when completing your on-line assessment, the zoom setting may need to be decreased to 90%.*

Pop-up Blockers

Please check to see if you have pop-up blocking software installed on your computer. If so, please **disable the pop-up blocking software until the on-line assessment is complete** because this software may prevent the on-line assessment from opening correctly.

Pop-up blocking software is included and turned on by default in some anti-virus, Internet security, personal firewall, browsers, and many of the free toolbars available, including the toolbars supplied by Google, MSN, and Yahoo. The instructions on how to uninstall or disable each particular pop-up blocker will vary depending on that particular software.

The places that pop-up blocking software can exist are too numerous to name; however, here is a list of the most common areas to find pop-up blockers:

Internet Explorer: Includes a pop-up blocker that is enabled by default. To disable this, click on **Tools** on your Internet Explorer menu bar, point to **Pop-up Blocker**, and select **Turn Off Pop-up Blocker**.

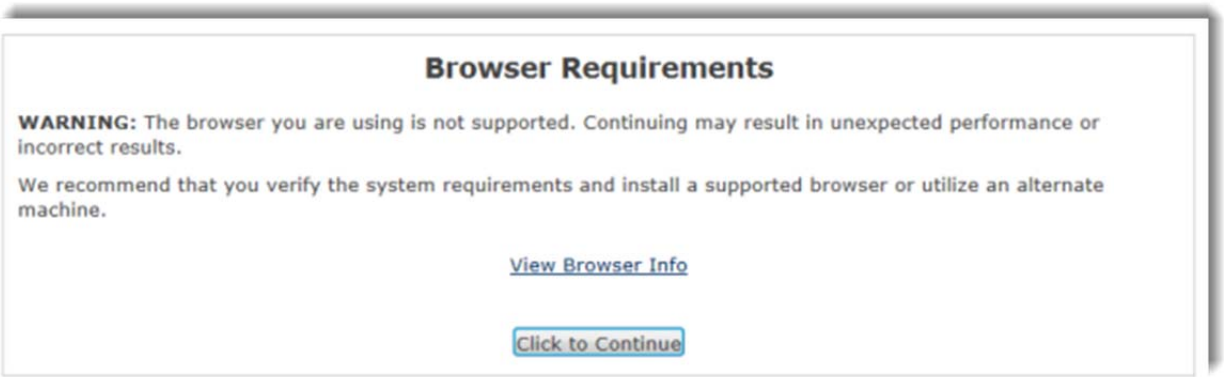
Toolbars: Look at your browser's toolbar for **Google**, **MSN**, or **Yahoo** toolbars. Most, if not all, of these toolbars include a pop-up blocker. To temporarily disable these pop-up blockers, click on the **"blocked"** button on the toolbar.

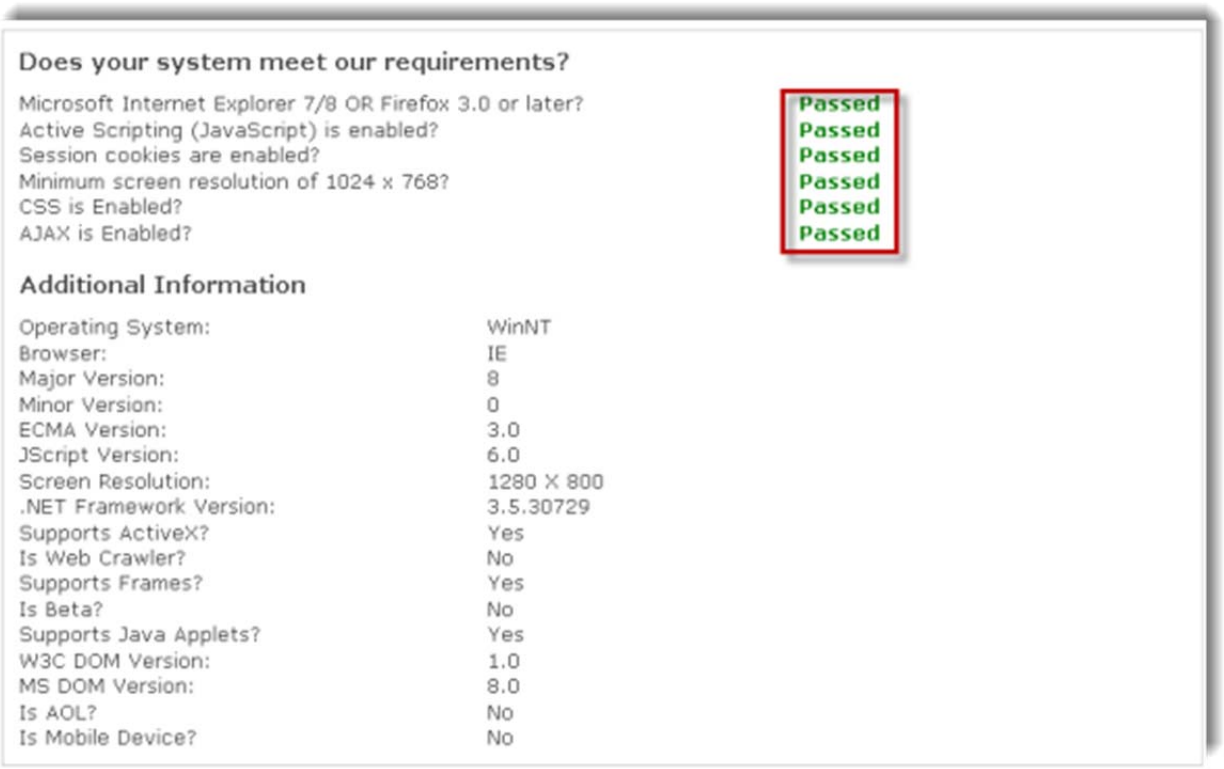
Bypassing pop-up blockers can often be accomplished by holding down the **Ctrl** key on your keyboard while clicking on the link that you will be accessing to complete your testing.

System Requirement Check

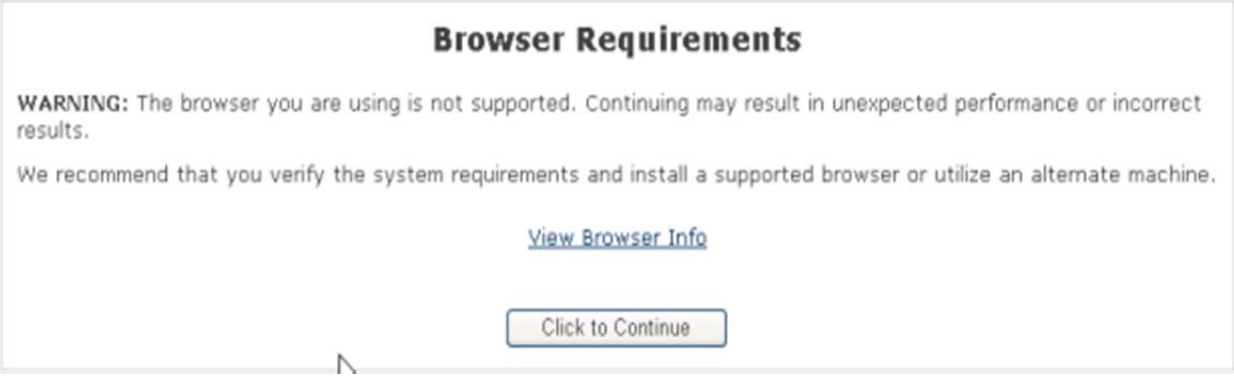
An automatic system check is performed prior to launching the on-line assessment. ***If the local system does not meet the requirements a warning message is displayed to the user. Although a warning is displayed, you are permitted to continue on to the assessment; however, the assessment may not perform as expected. You may also check the local browser settings. If your local system meets all requirements, you will be taken directly into the on-line assessment.***

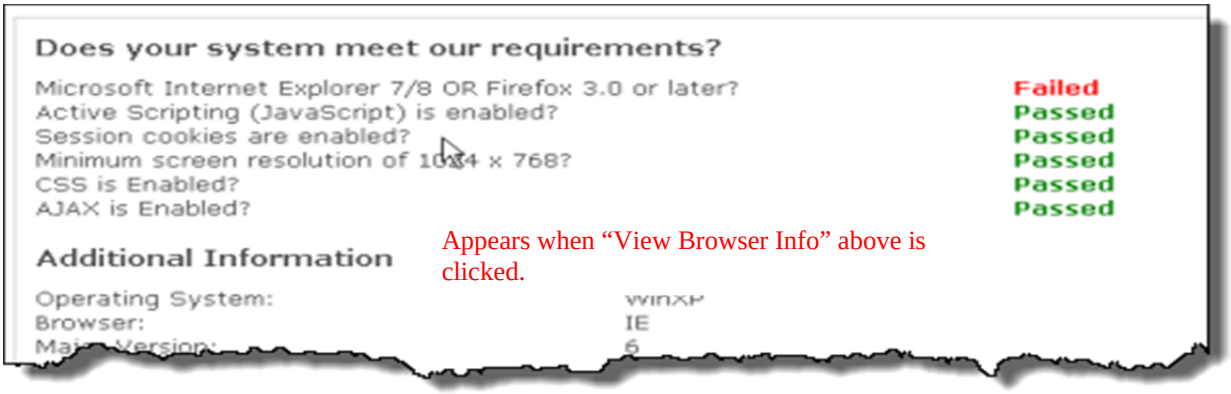
Below are screen shots of the system check:





Browser Compatibility Warning





IMPORTANT NOTE: Please do NOT share any emails and/or links provided to you during the application and assessment process with anyone else. The emails and links are personalized for you as the applicant.

Notification of the On-Line Assessment Results

All applicants will be notified whether or not they are selected as Semi-Finalists. Please refer to the timeline posted under the "Become a PMF" section and the "News & Events" section on the PMF website at www.pmf.gov for any updates. Semi-Finalists will be invited to participate in the in-person assessment and given information on how to schedule their in-person assessment.

Phase Two: In-Person Assessment

The in-person assessment is an immersion experience that simulates a day in the life of a PMF. You will participate in a series of 3 timed exercises structured around issues relevant to the Federal Government today: Group Exercise, Behavioral Interview, and a Written Exercise. A panel will evaluate the degree to which you demonstrate the PMF critical competencies assessed in each exercise.

The in-person assessment will last **approximately five hours*** and is designed to be a challenging, highly engaging experience. You should be prepared to have very little downtime. All Semi-Finalists must participate in the "in-person" assessment to be considered for selection as a Finalist. The in-person assessment center will have accessible restrooms, food and beverages within walking distance, and access to public transportation.

*Semi-Finalists should ensure ample time for arrival and departure of the in-person assessments. Semi-Finalists will not be able to leave early due to travel commitments.

All 2014 in-person assessments will be conducted at the U.S. Department of State's Foreign Service Exam Center at 301 4th Street SW, Washington, DC 20547. This facility complies with Federal accessibility guidelines.

There are two Metro stations within walking distance: L'Enfant Plaza and Federal Center SW. Information about Metro can be found at www.metroopensdoors.com. We encourage you to sign-up for Metro Alerts here: http://www.metroalerts.info/logon.aspx.

TIP: *Allow sufficient time for arrival. There could be delays with public transportation or inclement weather. Schedule any return flights at least 2 hours later to allow for any delays.*

Semi-Finalists will receive a personalized email with instructions on how to schedule their in-person assessment. **Please note that registration is on a first-come, first-serve basis, and the link to register is personalized for you only.** All in-person assessments must take place during the advertised timeline on the PMF website. Sessions fill up quickly and registration will close at 11:59pm (ET), Sunday, January 5, 2014. When registering, you will be asked to select your preferred date and time. You must click on the blue REGISTER button to confirm your reservation.

The Written Exercise will be collected via a laptop provided at the in-person assessment. The essay will be collected at the end of the assessment and scored by assessors. To request a reasonable accommodation for using a laptop for the written exercise, please follow the steps to submit a request for reasonable accommodation **during the open on-line application period**.

Please select your appointment carefully as appointments AFTER THE REGISTRATION DEADLINE will only be rescheduled in cases of emergencies by contacting pmfapplication@opm.gov. When submitting a request to reschedule AFTER the January 5, 2014, registration deadline, please send from the email associated to your application and include the following: full name, Applicant ID#, original scheduled appointment, and reason for requesting a reschedule. Rescheduling of appointments will be based on availability and reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Please note that reschedules will be limited to one reschedule per Semi-Finalist. Any "no shows" will be withdrawn from further consideration.

Semi-Finalists' Coffee Chat

The PMF Program Office will be inviting all Semi-Finalists (via a separate email) to an on-line Coffee Chat for Tuesday, November 26, 2013. The Coffee Chat will include tips for scheduling, a general overview of the in-person assessment process, and next steps; similar to what this Guide already provides. This Coffee Chat is strictly for 2014 Semi-Finalists and by invitation only. This is a one-time only webcast.

In-Person Assessment Admission Rules

- ✓ Semi-Finalists should check the PMF website's "News & Events" (on the homepage) for any notices on delays or closures due to inclement weather and/or emergencies.

- ✓ You must report to the assessment center at the scheduled time. The Washington, DC, location is a Federal Government building and may require additional time to clear security. If you arrive late, you may **not** be allowed to participate in the in-person assessment. Accommodating late arrivals will be at the discretion of the Site Coordinator.

- ✓ **You must bring valid government-issued State or Federal photo identification, such as a driver's license or a passport.** The Security Guard at the assessment center will retain your identification upon check-in. Immediately upon your arrival, please proceed through the security check-in so that you are processed in time. Inform Security you are here for the "Presidential Management Fellows Program In-Person Assessments". Please double-check you receive *your* identification upon departure. Do not bring anything else; ex. resumes or dictionaries.

- ✓ Any snacks or bottled beverages brought must be consumed in designated areas only. However you are not allowed to bring any prohibited items (such as food, drinks, purses, briefcases, luggage, coats, backpacks, notebooks, books, cell phones, or electronic devices) on the desk/table surfaces of the assessment rooms. A designated room will be provided for participants to store personal belongings. We are not responsible for your personal belongings so please use your best judgment with items you elect to bring.

- ✓ You must return all assessment materials, including scratch paper, provided by the assessment staff before departing the center. You may bring extra pens.

TIP: *Use the Internet to map the assessment location; plan to arrive early; search for local restaurants, lodging, and parking garages, if applicable; and get plenty of rest before your scheduled assessment. You are expected to show up on time and be prepared for the full exercise.*

Inclement Weather (covering the Washington, DC, metro area)

If the Federal Government is "closed" due to inclement weather or other unforeseen events, the in-person assessments impacted will also be cancelled. If the in-person assessment closes on the day of your scheduled assessment, you will need to reschedule; we will attempt to contact those participants impacted. Hence, you should use your cell phone number when registering so we can reach you quicker.

If the Federal Government announces a "delayed arrival", Semi-Finalists should still attempt to arrive on-time in a safe and orderly fashion. We will proceed with the scheduled in-person assessment once sufficient Semi-Finalists, Assessors, and staff assemble. If the Federal Government announces an "early departure", the Site Coordinator will inform you.

You are responsible for monitoring your email for all notices regarding the in-person assessment. The PMF Program Office will do its best to monitor such situations and post any news worthy events to the "News & Events" section on the PMF website at www.pmf.gov. In-person assessments are not conducted on Federal holidays or weekends.

To monitor the Operating Status in the Washington, DC, metro area, you can go to OPM's website at www.opm.gov. We encourage you to download the "OPM Alert mobile app" from this website.

TIP: *A change in Operating Status may impact your commute and travel. Please adjust accordingly.*

Notification of the In-Person Assessment Results

Semi-Finalists will be notified whether or not they are selected as Finalists via email. Please refer to the timeline posted under the "Become a PMF" section and any updates posted to the "News & Events" section on the PMF website at www.pmf.gov.

Contact Information

Any and all inquiries regarding the application and assessment process must be sent via email to pmfapplication@opm.gov. This mailbox will be monitored during the in-person assessments.

***PLEASE NOTE:* Assessment results are not provided and there is no appeal process.**