



FAQs: Agricultural Marketing Service Agricultural Commodity Grader Apprenticeship

What is the Agricultural Commodity Grader (ACG) Apprenticeship?

The USDA Agricultural Commodity Grader (ACG) Apprenticeship is a 12-month training program offered by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). The apprenticeship provides technical training and professional development to produce the next generation of USDA agricultural commodity graders, one of AMS's six mission critical occupations. The apprenticeship is approved by and registered with the Department of Labor (DOL).

What is an Agricultural Commodity Grader (ACG)?

Agricultural commodity grading and inspection services establish and certify the quality and/or condition of a product within the marketing channels, with the goal of facilitating trade. The apprenticeship provides training for Agricultural Commodity Graders (Specialty Crops) positions. Specialty crops ACGs are USDA's front-line, mission-essential technical experts who deliver inspection, grading, and certification services to those who buy and sell America's fruits, vegetables, and other specialty crops and products. They provide specialty crop traders consistency and confidence in their transactions.

How does it work?

Participants will receive one year of blended technical training on specialty crops inspection, grading and certification, and developmental training on professional skills, such as interpersonal communications and leadership. They will also receive mentoring, community service opportunities and other support.

Where do I go to train?

Apprentices receive their training on their job sites, at the AMS Specialty Crops Inspection (SCI) Training and Development Center in Fredericksburg, Va., and online through an interactive learning management system.

Will I receive pay and benefits during the training?

Apprentices earn the pay and benefits appropriate to their grade and the hiring authority under which they were hired.

What is the pay grade of an apprentice?

Agricultural Commodity Grader (ACG) is a career-ladder position with promotion potential to the GS-7 level or greater. Most apprentices start at the GS-5 level and are eligible for promotion to GS-7 upon completion of the apprenticeship. Some may start at the GS-7 level, depending on their experience.

If I am a veteran, can I use my veterans' benefits in the program?

Apprentices that are eligible for GI Bill benefits can use those benefits, which may include a monthly housing allowance and an additional stipend for books and supplies. In the future, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) may offer benefits through the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program.

What is the outcome of the training?

In most cases, apprentices who complete the program will meet the qualifications of the USDA Agricultural Commodity Grader (ACG) position at the GS-7 level and will have nationally recognized DOL Apprentice Accreditation as well as the skills and competencies for professional success. Additionally, AMS will have an expanded talent pool of USDA professionals and leaders.

Will I be promoted to the GS-7 level once I complete the program?

At the end of the training, most apprentices will be qualified for GS-7 Agricultural Commodity Grader (ACG) positions. Job opportunities are always based on staffing plans and organizational needs. Those who were hired as GS-7 are eligible to compete for any open GS-9 ACG positions at their duty station, within SCI or government-wide.

How do I become an Agricultural Commodity Grader (ACG) apprentice?

To become an apprentice, apply for an Agricultural Commodity Grader (Specialty Crops) position listed on the AMS [Careers page](#) or on USAJOBS.com, through a job recruitment event or the Department of Veterans Affairs' Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E), or email ApprenticeshipInfo@ams.usda.gov. Agricultural Commodity Graders (Specialty Crops) are hired to fill current vacancies in specific localities. Current AMS ACGs should contact their supervisors if they have questions about the ACG Apprenticeship.

What commodities does this apprenticeship include?

The apprenticeship provides training in grading fruits, vegetables and specialty crops.

Who do I contact for more information about the Agricultural Commodity Grader (ACG) Apprenticeship?

For more information, email ApprenticeshipInfo@ams.usda.gov.