

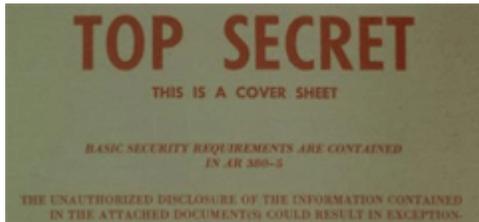
SECURITY CLEARANCES

You are looking at [Ashton Search Group's](#) postings and spot a great job. It has the technology you want, in a location that is acceptable... and you have already have the skills and experience the company needs. The deal killer: "*requires a Secret clearance*".

We are frequently asked "Can I get a clearance so I can be considered by defense companies?" No. Individuals can't apply for a security clearance. To qualify you must be a U.S. citizen, work for a government agency or a defense company with a federal contract -- and require access to classified information to do your job.

Clearances are issued for specific circumstances... but read on, there is good news. We will explain the process that will start you on the way.

Ashton Search Group includes an exhaustive list of defense sector companies as their clients, and places both cleared and "clearance eligible" engineers and technical managers with them. In fact, over the past 20 years, nearly 40% of our placements, at all levels, are with defense sector companies nationwide. Of that, over 50% of the candidates we placed did **not** have a clearance - but had specific experience the company needed. ASG recruiters have successfully placed a large number of engineers and managers with defense companies... that now hold clearances.



What is a security clearance... and who issues it?

A security clearance is the process of checking the new employee's background, and determining the applicant's trustworthiness... before granting access to information pertaining to national security. There are different levels: Confidential, Secret and Top Secret (more on this later).

It is estimated that one out of every 40 Americans has a security clearance. At any given time, there are about 3 million U.S. citizens with active security clearances, and civilian clearances account for about 40% of this number.

Only federal agencies can issue a security clearance. They include all national intelligence agencies (CIA, NSA), federal law enforcement agencies (FBI, Secret Service, others), civilian (DSS), U.S. military, and diplomatic agencies (State Dept).

The Defense Security Service (DSS) is the authority that handles the investigation, evaluates the results and grants the clearance.

The security clearance process involves three phases: (1) Application process to include verification of U.S. citizenship, fingerprinting, and completion of the SF-86 application (2) Background investigation conducted by the DSS and (3) the adjudication phase for granting the clearance.

[Executive Order 10450](#), signed in 1953, gave certain agencies of the United States government the authority to adjudicate employees who require access to national security information. Here is what it says in its introduction:

"WHEREAS, the interests of the national security require

What is a security clearance investigation... what do they ask?

This is how the Defense Security Service, the agency that conducts background investigations for the Department of Defense, defines it:

that all persons privileged to be employed in the departments of the Government, shall be reliable, trustworthy, of good conduct and character, and of complete and unswerving loyalty to the United States; and

WHEREAS, the American tradition that all persons should receive fair, impartial, and equitable treatment at the hands of the Government requires that all persons seeking the privilege of employment or privilege to be employed in the departments of the government be adjudged by mutually consistent and no less than minimum standards and procedures among the departments governing the employment of persons in the Federal service."

"A security clearance investigation is an inquiry into an individual's loyalty, character, trustworthiness and reliability to ensure that he or she is eligible for access to national security information. The investigation focuses on an individual's character and conduct, emphasizing such factors as honesty, trustworthiness, reliability, financial responsibility, criminal activity, emotional stability, and other pertinent areas. All investigations consist of checks of national records and credit history; some investigations also include interviews with individuals who know the candidate, as well as the candidate himself/herself."

You will complete a **SF-86 Questionnaire for National Security Positions**, provided by your employer (an online version of **Electronic Questionnaires for Investigations Processing**, called e-QIP, is available). Your acceptance of

terms allows the government to order credit reports, review your medical history, access your transcripts and check for a criminal record.

When your employer submits your completed SF-86, the DSS will verify and evaluate it, keeping 13 critical factors in mind, including: any discovered criminal history, your personal conduct over the years, history of substance abuse, mental health and allegiance to the United States.

Depending on the depth of the investigation, it will usually be concluded in between five months and one year. Currently, there are nearly 370,000 background investigations in process by the DSS staff.

What types of clearances are there... and what are the differences?

For classification purposes, the types of security clearances are:

CONFIDENTIAL

Provides limited access to information or material that may cause damage to national security if disclosed.

SECRET

Provides access to information or material that may cause serious damage to national security if disclosed. Requires a National Agency Check (NAC), a search of criminal records held by any federal agencies, or a Local Agency Check (LAC).

TOP SECRET

Provides access to information or material that may cause exceptionally grave damage to national security if disclosed. There are different levels of Top Secret, granted on a case by case basis. The process normally includes a polygraph evaluation.

TOP SECRET/Sensitive Compartmented Information

Provides access to all intelligence information and material that requires special controls for restricted handling within compartmented channels, and for which compartmentation is mandated.

In addition, some clearances allow access to particularly sensitive information. Known as *Special Access Programs*, these clearances are defined by the DSS as any program that is established to control access, distribution, and to provide protection for information beyond top secret levels.



How will a security clearance benefit me?

Cleared individuals are in demand by defense companies throughout the United States, bidding for military contracts, including homeland security and intelligence business.

Experts agree that a security clearance can increase your salary anywhere from \$3,000 to \$15,000, depending on the company's urgency. If a company hires a person who will need their first clearance, they may have more than six months of downtime, where the new hire must be relegated to non-secure tasks -- prior to being eligible to work on the project for which he/she was hired. If they can hire an individual who has the necessary clearance, such as a candidate from a competitor or an industry with similar technology, that person is immediately more valuable to them. Companies call this "having a ticket".

As an added benefit, the clearance requirement prevents the position from ever being offshored.

Importance of a security clearance.

The importance of a security clearance is not limited to defense sector companies. The medical, telecommunications and financial fields have an increasing number of jobs where corporate information needs to be protected. Also, many of the jobs in the hottest emerging technologies: biometrics, bioinformatics, biotechnology, information security, cryptanalysis and integration software require a clearance.

Robert Crotinger, a partner with Ashton Search Group says: "We have been successful in placing 'clearance eligible' technical professionals with our defense sector clients for over 20 years. Unless the company specifies an existing clearance, we present all candidates with qualifications meeting their technical requirements. Due to the overwhelming need for engineers and managers, our clients are being very reasonable about making offers to candidates with the right experience. The defense sector has shown sustained growth for the past 12 years. Clients are becoming more aggressive every year, relative to salaries, to attract the best engineers."

Well into the future, a clearance is likely to be a front row ticket to advanced technology. Now that you understand the process, you can look for that next position in the defense sector.

Submit resume to: resumes@ashtonsearchgroup.com

Ashton Search Group,



Restrictions and Copyrights: Information published in the Ashton Search Group® web site may be displayed, and printed for your personal, non-commercial use only. Data, information or other components may not be republished, reproduced, reprinted, distributed, disseminated, duplicated or resold in whole or in part, for commercial or any other purposes. You may not modify, copy, distribute, transmit, reproduce, publish, license, create derivative works from, transfer, or sell any information obtained from Ashton Search Group®