Advice for Preparing for the PMF Job Fair

Pre-Job Fair Preparation
After finalists for the PMF program are announced, the PMF website will have job postings the finalists can apply to for interviews at the PMF job fair. You may want to call agencies without postings to see if they are hiring.

It can be overwhelming to apply to all of the agencies, focus on the jobs you are qualified for. You do want to maximize the opportunity and try to set up as many interviews for the job fair as possible.

It is important to remain organized. Keep a file for every job you apply for with the posting, materials you sent including a copy of your resume that has been tailored for that position.

Each agency has its own hiring process. Some may schedule phone interviews prior to the job fair. For example, the Department of Defense conducts a phone interview, in person interview at the job fair, and a call back interview at the Pentagon. Some agencies will not post their openings, such as the State Department, but will be present to meet with candidates at the job fair. You may want to keep some time available at the job fair to meet with these agencies.

Know the agencies and what they do. You may not be able to find detailed descriptions of the position you are applying for, but you should have a solid understanding of what the agency does.

The Interview
The interviews on the first day are generally a half an hour in length. The interviews take place in a convention center in curtained booths. Some agencies will schedule second round interviews at the job fair or may ask you to interview at the agency.

The structure of the interview will vary with each agency but most were described as fairly relaxed. Some will use behavioral interviewing questions (a good resource in Career Services to learn more about behavioral interviewing is “High Impact Interview Questions” by Victoria Hoevenmeyer). You should be prepared to give your 20 second hard sell of why you are qualified for the position. Try to make specific connections between your background and the job you are interviewing for and draw from all of your experience.

Questions you may be asked:
What skills are you looking to gain from the PMF experience?
Be ready to answer questions about your long term career goals.
The agency wants to know you have a passion/commitment to the agency.
These are non-traditional legal positions. Be ready to explain why you are interested in this opportunity and not a traditional legal position.
Questions you may want to ask:
Ask questions about the day to day work of the office and the position.
How many PMFs do they hire/have they had in the past?
What is the career ladder for the job? Most positions will start at GS-9 some cap at GS-11 or GS-13
What is the promotion policy? Some have an accelerated promotion program where you can be promoted after 6 months.
What is your rotation policy? PMF allows you to do 2-3 rotations in 2 years.

Other Information
80-85% of the jobs are in D.C. but you may be able to do rotations in other parts of the country. The agency will often help with the travel and lodging costs to move to a new location.

If an offer is made on the spot and the agency is pressuring you for a decision, be cautious that it is the right fit for you. You may be able to get more time to consider your other options before making a final decision.

Send thank you notes via email to everyone you meet with. With the agencies you are most interested in, you may want to send a more formal thank you letter.

Maximize your time at the job fair and meet other candidates. They may land jobs with agencies you are interested in and learn of future vacancies. These will also be your colleagues if you join the PMF program.