

**USDA HSPD-12  
General Applicant  
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

Prepared for



**United States Department of Agriculture  
Office of Safety Security and Protection (OSSP)**

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## Revision Information

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For any questions not covered by this FAQ, please contact the HSPD-12 Helpdesk at [usdahspd12help@usda.gov](mailto:usdahspd12help@usda.gov) or 1-833-682-4675

## 1 What is the purpose of HSPD-12?

The purpose of Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12 (HSPD-12) is to provide a common reliable identification verification for Government employees and contractors. It will help to protect against a variety of threats including:

- Unauthorized access to physical facilities or logical assets
- Improper issuance of valid credential to malicious holder
- Counterfeiting of credentials
- Use of stolen or borrowed credential to gain access
- Use of credential issued for access to lower sensitivity/criticality assets to achieve access to more sensitive/critical assets

## 2 What is the Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) 201-2?

The Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS 201-2): dated August 2013 (1) defines a reliable, Government-wide PIV system for use in applications such as access to federally controlled facilities or information systems; (2) specifies a PIV system within which common identification badges can be created and later used to verify a claimed identity; and (3) requires identity proofing and background investigations (BIs) to verify identity.

OMB Implementation Memoranda M-05-24 and M-19-17 provide guidance for implementing the requirements in FIPS 201-2 and HSPD-12. The guidance clarifies timelines, applicability, and the requirements of PIV.

## 3 What is the difference between the LincPass and the PIV Credential?

There is no difference. The LincPass is the PIV credential. USDA coined our PIV credential after Abraham Lincoln who founded the Department of Agriculture, hence the “LincPass”.

## 4 What is an AltLinc credential?

USDA has implemented a PIV-I credential (called AltLinc), which may be issued as an alternative to the LincPass for cases in which short-term Federal employees/non-Federal employees require limited access to federally controlled facilities and/or information systems for fewer than six months

## 5 Who decides if I require a LincPass/AltLinc?

A sponsor will decide if you need a LincPass/AltLinc through the process of a credential risk assessment using the USDA Credential Matrix to determine if a person requires a LincPass/AltLinc. Through the Risk Assessment, other determining factors for the requirement of a LincPass/AltLinc include:

- The Employee requires a Level 2 eAuthentication account, a USDA email address, or access another protected IT resource
- If the Employee has access to sensitive information,
- If the Employee requires unescorted access to areas within Mission Critical or National Capital Region (NCR) facilities or as determined by an agency’s local risk assessment process

Below is the USDA Credential Matrix that Sponsors use to determine the type of credential a person may require.

**Table 1: USDA Credential Matrix**

IT and Physical Access Rights Required	LincPass	AltLinc	Site Badge	Visitor Badge	No Badge
IT & Unaccompanied Physical Access Required > 6 Months	✓				
IT & Unaccompanied Physical Access Required < 6 Months		✓			
No IT Access Required & Unaccompanied Physical Access Required			✓		
No IT Access Required & Accompanied Physical Access Required				✓	
No IT or Physical Access Required					✓

## 6 Do I have to get a LincPass/AltLinc?

If your Sponsor determines via the USDA Credential Matrix that you need a LincPass/AltLinc, then you need to obtain one.

## 7 What personal information is being stored on the PIV or PIV-I Credential?

The PIV or PIV-I Credential is designed to securely store your identification verification data. It does not contain personal information such as your social security number, date of birth, or personal address. The only data stored in your credential are your digital photograph, fingerprints, and cryptographic keys. The back of your credential contains your height, eye color and hair color.

Cryptographic keys are methods for securely transmitting and authenticating information such as emails and can be used to digitally sign and encrypt emails to ensure your emails are kept confidential and only read by the intended receiver.

## 8 What do I have to do to get a LincPass/AltLinc?

Contact your agency sponsor. If you do not know who your sponsor is, you might research this information on your agencies intranet to find the Agency HSPD12/LincPass program manager or lead. Alternatively, you can contact your agencies Human Resource department or the USDA HSPD-12 Help Desk ([USDAHSPD12HELP@USDA.GOV](mailto:USDAHSPD12HELP@USDA.GOV)).

## **9 I am retiring soon; do I need a LincPass/AltLinc?**

If you have submitted your retirement paperwork and have less than 6 months before retirement you will not need to enroll for the LincPass/ AltLinc.

## **10 Can I appeal denial or revocation of my LincPass/AltLinc?**

Yes, all Applicants have a right to appeal denial or revocation of your LincPass/AltLinc. Contact your Sponsor or Adjudicator.

## **11 When do my digital certificates have to be renewed?**

The digital certificates on your LincPass must be renewed every three years. You will receive a notification from USAccess when it is time to renew. Digital certificate renewal will not be required for AltLinc credentials as these credentials expire after 6 months.

## **12 When does my LincPass/AltLinc expire?**

Your LincPass is valid for 5 years. You will receive a notification from USAccess when it is time to renew your LincPass.

AltLinc credentials expire after 6 months and can only be issued one time in a one-year period. If a person requires a credential for longer than 6 months, they should obtain a LincPass.

## **13 What do I do if I locked my PIN?**

Visit an Issuer/Activator at any Enrollment or Activation Station and they can unlock your PIN.

## **14 How do I reset my PIN?**

Visit an Issuer/Activator at any Enrollment or Activation Station and they will help you reset your PIN.

## **15 What is the difference between a PIN and a Password?**

The one-time use system password is sent to the Applicant in an e-mail that notifies him or her that the credential has been delivered and is ready for pickup. The password is in the body of the e-mail and is used to activate the Applicant's credential for the first time.

The Credential Holder creates the PIN during the activation of the LincPass/AltLinc. The PIN is six to eight digits long and is used to protect the private information on your USAccess Credential.

## **16 What do I do if I find a LincPass/AltLinc?**

Give the LincPass/AltLinc to the physical security personnel at your work location. Otherwise, mail the credential to the address listed on the back of the LincPass/AltLinc.

## **17 What do I do if I lost my LincPass/AltLinc?**

Inform both your Sponsor and Security Officer as soon as you realize your LincPass/AltLinc is lost. The Security Officer will immediately suspend your LincPass/AltLinc for 72 hours. If it is not found within 72 hours, the LincPass/AltLinc will be revoked and you will need your LincPass/AltLinc reissued by your Sponsor.

## **18 What do I do if my LincPass/AltLinc is stolen?**

Follow the same instructions for a lost [LincPass/AltLinc](#).

## **19 I damaged my LincPass/AltLinc, how do I get a replacement?**

Inform your Sponsor or Agency Security Officer; they can reissue your LincPass/AltLinc.

## **20 What are my LincPass/AltLinc cardholder responsibilities?**

For a list of cardholder responsibilities, please go to: <https://www.fedidcard.gov/your-credential>

## **21 How should I care for my LincPass/AltLinc?**

As a USDA LincPass/AltLinc holder, you must treat your LincPass/AltLinc with the same care you would with other identification credentials like your driver's license, a credit card or social security card. Always keep your LincPass/AltLinc in the approved cardholder. Do not alter the LincPass/AltLinc in anyway (i.e. do not scratch it or place holes in it).

## **22 I have forgotten my PIN. How do I reset my LincPass/AltLinc PIN?**

The LincPass/AltLinc PIN can be reset at any USAccess Enrollment or Activation station.

## **23 Does a card update require a visit to an Enrollment or Activation station?**

To have your LincPass/AltLinc updated you must visit an Enrollment or Activation station at a credentialing center. Please schedule an appointment for a card update through the GSA's Assured Identity Scheduler prior to your visit: [www.fedidcard.gov](http://www.fedidcard.gov).

## **24 How do I get a badge holder after I have activated my credential?**

Your agency will determine if you are to receive a badge holder. Your agency will also determine what kind of holder it will provide for your credential. If you did not receive one when you picked up your credential and think you should have, contact your Agency sponsor.

## **25 As an employee, do I need to get another credential if I change jobs within the same Agency?**

No. Your credential will remain active if the information on the face of the credential is not changed.

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**26 I need to change some information on my LincPass/AltLinc and was told I need to talk to my sponsor. How do I find out who my sponsor is?**

You may contact your supervisor, local security officer, human resource manager or check with the HSPD-12 USDA helpdesk ([usdahspd12help@usda.gov](mailto:usdahspd12help@usda.gov)) to find your sponsor. That individual will determine if the information that is needed to be changed will require you to re-enroll and receive a new credential.

**27 I am getting married or divorced and changing my name and have an appointment to enroll for my LincPass/AltLinc. Should I wait?**

Contact your sponsor for specifics about how you should proceed regarding waiting. Prior to requesting a new LincPass/AltLinc, please make sure you have the required acceptable forms of ID with your new name or relevant Personally Identifiable Information on it that has changed.

Next, contact your sponsor to ensure that your name has changed in the USAccess system. You will receive another sponsorship complete email. You must re-enroll and get a new PIV Credential. You will need to bring your new forms of identification with you to your enrollment. Please read the [Acceptable Forms of ID Guide](#) for detailed instructions about what to bring to each appointment.

**28 I am changing Departments but staying within the Federal Government. I already have a PIV credential from one agency. Do I have to get a new one? Do I have to reenroll?**

Possibly, if your enrollment data is expiring within six months, re-enrollment at the new agency will be required to obtain a PIV card from that agency.