

Policy Analyst

Work out whether a law or a program actually does what it promised, and write the memo that decides it.

TYPICAL PAY

\$101,860

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$61k to \$172k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 6 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Government agencies, legislatures, think tanks, nonprofits, consulting...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
History, government, English and statistics. Argue in writing, with evidence, as often as you can.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
Economics, political science, statistics, public health or almost anything analytical. Economics and statistics open the most doors, because the work is quantitative more often than people expect.
- 3 Internships and entry roles** During and just after the degree
A legislative office, a city department, a nonprofit or a federal internship program. This is how nearly everyone gets in, and it matters more than your grades.
- 4 Master's degree, usually** About 2 years
A Master of Public Policy or Master of Public Administration takes about 2 years. Schools in this field are accredited by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs and Administration, which has more than 300 member institutions.
- 5 Analyst post** Ongoing
Federal jobs are advertised on USAJOBS (the official federal hiring site), and state and city jobs on their own portals. Expect the federal hiring process to take months.

Pros and cons

- + Your work can change what happens to thousands of people
- + No license, no exam, and many routes in
- + Reasonable hours and real job security in government
- Government pay lags the private sector badly
- Good analysis is regularly ignored for political reasons
- Federal hiring is slow, and a change of administration can freeze it

Good to know

The job has no official wage line

The federal wage survey does not publish figures for policy analysts. They are counted with management analysts, a group full of private-sector consultants, which is why the published median of \$1...

Federal pay is published to the dollar

The General Schedule lists every grade and step in the federal civil service. In 2026 grade 7 starts at \$43,106, grade 9 at \$52,727 and grade 13 at \$90,925, with locality pay added on top. You can look up...

Optional boosts

Statistics and a programming language. Budget analysis. One subject area you know deeply. Plain writing.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Management Analysts, the wage line this job is counted under
Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs and Administration
Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management
Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/policy-analyst>



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