Career Opportunities in SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND PUBLIC POLICY

Description of the field
Science, technology, and public policy is a maturing field focused on the interactions among scientific developments, technological change, social values, and governmental activities at both international and domestic levels. It is concerned with the ways in which citizens and professionals in industry, government, labor, academia, and non-profit organizations understand these interactions and apply their understanding to solve social, environmental, human health, and economic problems, as well as promote and manage scientific and technological systems that serve as potential solutions.

Career Paths
Recent graduates with science policy degrees work in research, analysis, or management with such positions as Research Analyst, Program or Policy Analyst, Legislative Analyst, or the more specific Environmental Protection Specialist. Salaries may be higher for candidates with technical or scientific undergraduate or graduate degrees or significant work experience in the field, on Capitol Hill, or in federal agencies, nonprofit think tanks, or industry.

Career paths in policy making, policy analysis, and policy research require different kinds of skills and capabilities as well as different types of training and work styles. In addition, career paths leading to similar positions may differ. For example, senior executive-level policy making positions in federal agencies often require scientific or technical credentials, whereas senior congressional committee policy making positions are less demanding of technical qualifications and more demanding of political skills. The same may be said of policy management careers. A person entering the field as a Research or Policy Assistant might expect to progress to Analyst or Technical Consultant, later becoming Project Director or senior professional staff, and ultimately advancing to policy making positions such as Assistant Secretary, Executive Director, or Vice President. With some exceptions, a PhD is usually required for movement to senior levels, and generally the closer the position is to academia or high-level think tanks, the more a PhD is needed.

QUALIFICATIONS TO ENTER THE FIELD

+ Analytical skills, both qualitative and quantitative
+ Knowledge of the policy environment and the significant issues affecting policies
+ Information management skills
+ Effective reporting and communication skills, both verbal and written
+ Strong background in economics
+ Political and persuasive skills, especially diplomacy when working with diverse groups
+ Good teamwork and networking skills
+ Substantive knowledge of a specialized area such as biotechnology, defense, space, or the environment
+ A technical degree (e.g. PhD, MS, or BS in physics or engineering) is required for positions in some science and technology organizations

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Demand
Public sector employers have traditionally hired more science and technology policy graduates than any other employer. Federal agency demands have increased since September 11, 2001 because of the need for science and technology experts working in national security policy, computer and telecommunications issues, as well as public health and environmental hazards. Continuing growth in demand at the state level—where there is also a need for scientific and technical policy expertise—is contingent on the ability of states to overcome present fiscal cutbacks. In the international arena, there is a need for science and technology policy specialists to assist with bilateral negotiations, agreements, research, and grants management, especially around issues such as genetic engineering and its effect on international trade and health policies.

Private sector employers have tended to hire science and technology graduates with engineering or technical backgrounds and excellent analytical skills. Openings also occur in regulatory, strategic planning, or external relations departments for candidates with extensive congressional or federal experience. In research and consulting organizations that serve the federal government, there is a growing demand for science and technology specialists. This is especially true for those with expertise in the environment, telecommunications, the conversion of defense industries, public health issues, and technology transfer.

Sample Group of Employers
- American Association for the Advancement of Science - aaas.org
- American Physical Society - aps.org
- ANSER Corporation - anser.org
- Battelle Memorial Institute - battelle.org
- Center for Strategic and International Studies - csis.org
- Central Intelligence Agency - cia.gov
- Congressional Research Service - loc.gov/crsinfo
- US Department of Agriculture - usda.gov
- US Department of Commerce - doc.gov
- US Department of Defense - dod.gov
- US Department of Energy - doe.gov
- US Department of Interior - doi.gov
- US Department of State - state.gov
- Environmental Defense Fund - edf.org
- US Environmental Protection Agency – epa.gov
- Federal Bureau of Investigation - fbi.gov
- General Accountability Office - gao.gov
- Global Biotech - glo-bio.com
- House Committee on Science - science.house.gov
- Lockheed Martin - lockheedmartin.com

FUTURE CHALLENGES OF THE PROFESSION
+ There is an increasing awareness of the economic, political, and social consequences of decisions in the science, technology, and policy field in areas such as computers and telecommunication regulation, genetic engineering, cloning, biological weapons development, and global climate change, as well as other technological areas. There is an increasing need to build bridges and integrate diverse national and international institutions linking governments and universities with the private sector and with newly emerging businesses and research organizations. In addition, enhancing the scientific literacy of the public is paramount to making better political and societal decisions about science and technology. Expertise in science, technology, and public policy will be essential to help nations, citizens, and industry recognize their common interdependence, their common problems, and to agree on solutions and ways to pay for them.
Resources for Additional Information

Associations

- American Association for the Advancement of Science - aaas.org
- American Chemical Society - acs.org
- American Physical Society - aps.org
- Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology - faseb.org
- National Academy of Sciences - nas.edu
- International Association of Science and Technology for Development - iasted.org
- Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management - appam.org