

Career Opportunities in Education (Domestic)

There are a wide variety of opportunities to pursue in the education field including areas such as educational administration, educational foundations, government relations, grant writing, institutional research, and education policy. Education professionals also may work for organizations such as Teach for America.

Career Paths and Entry Salaries

Education administrators provide vision, direction, leadership, and day-to-day management of educational activities in schools, colleges and universities, businesses, correctional institutions, museums, and job training and community service organizations. They set educational standards and goals and aid in establishing the policies and procedures to carry them out. They develop academic programs; monitor students' educational progress; hire, train, motivate, and evaluate teachers and other staff; manage counseling and other student services; administer recordkeeping; prepare budgets; and handle relations with staff, parents, current and prospective students, employers, and the community. Salaries can start at about \$50,000 and increase according to skills and experience.

Educational Foundations are school foundations that are private, not-for-profit entities, usually incorporated under state laws or under the sponsorship of another private non-profit which is governed by a board of directors that is separate and distinct from the educational entities it was created to support. Salaries will vary depending on the role one assumes within the organization.

Government Relations works to promote access and equity in education for all students by shaping federal and state legislation, regulations, and programs. Also, those in this field work with strategic partners to help lead the nation in policy areas such as assessments, student financial aid, affirmative action, and diversity.

Grant writers create proposals, usually for educational institutions and non-profit organizations, to find and secure money from outside funding sources. This money is used for projects and services that these educational institutions and non-profit organizations want to complete, but can't afford to fund on their own. It takes a very skilled writer to compose a grant that will convince these outside funding sources to give their money to a particular project. The competition to receive a grant can be very stiff because so many organizations apply for grants, and sometimes the money available is limited. Writing a grant is a tedious step-by-step process. You must research the topic of the grant, learn about possible funding sources, and then find out how the funding sources want the grant written. You usually have to submit a grant following a very strict format. The funding sources will ask for a detailed description of how people will benefit from the funds they may provide. Research and writing skills are essential to be a successful grant writer. You must be able to clearly and succinctly explain what the organization for which you work is seeking and why. Since each funding source may ask for a grant to be composed in a different way, you have to be able to adapt your writing style to what the funding source is requesting. This job is very detail oriented, and it takes a patient and organized person to do it correctly. A bachelor's degree in communications, technical writing, business, public administration, education, or human services is usually required. A volunteer or internship position that allows you to learn about the grant writing process is a good way to get started in this career. Experience working with non-profit organizations is also a plus. The more exposure and experience you have, the more employable you are going to be.

Beginning grant writers can expect to earn between \$30,000 and \$40,000 annually. With experience and success in the field, salaries can rise to over \$60,000 per year. Any organization that depends on outside funding sources for money is usually looking for strong grant writers. If you are an excellent writer, very organized, and willing to dedicate a great amount of time and energy to securing funding for these organizations, jobs should be available. Of course, as you gain experience in the field and establish a reputation of securing grants for organizations, your ability to find employment will definitely increase.

Institutional Research involves collecting, analyzing, and preparing standard institutional reports on summary level institutional data, including trends and peer comparisons where appropriate. Those in this field conduct special research projects and reports to support policy development, decision making, accountability, program evaluation, and promotion of institution. Usually knowledge of creating surveys, conducting focus groups and collecting and analyzing statistical data is required.

Education Policy professionals monitor/analyze economic, social and political issues affecting educational sector development. Through this process, they identify education policy development needs and potential solutions relevant to project activities.

Teach For America's mission to eliminate educational inequity in this country motivates many alumni of the program to become committed leaders in the effort to expand opportunities for all children. Since 1990, more than 10,000 exceptional individuals have joined Teach For America, committing two years to teach in low-income rural and urban communities. Following this experience, many have become school administrators or moved into lobbying or legislative work to promote the importance of educating all children.

Whether they remain in education or go into other fields, Teach For America alumni work throughout their lives to promote the systemic changes required to put children growing up in low-income communities on a level playing field with children from more affluent areas.

Qualifications Necessary/Application Procedures to Enter Field

Qualifications will vary depending on the area of education an individual would like to pursue. Most often, a bachelor's and master's degrees in a relevant field will be required; in some cases a doctorate will be preferred. The ability to build effective relationships with a wide range of people and to solicit cooperation from individuals and groups is essential.

Sample Employers

- Academy for Educational Development, www.aed.org
- Colleges and Universities
- Department of Education in your state
- National Center for Education Statistics, nces.ed.gov/
- Teach For America, www.teachforamerica.org
- U.S. Department of Education, www.ed.gov

Demand and Future Challenges of Profession

As the employment market demands skilled professionals to replace the Baby Boom generation as it leaves the workforce over the next twenty years, and funding is continually cut for educational programming, there will be considerable need for educational advocates

and policy makers to restructure the way our education system works. If these demographic trends and the increasing demand for skilled workers are not factored into education, employment and training policy, the skill gap in our labor market may widen into a chasm.

The pressure of looming skill shortages in the American labor force may hasten the expansion of the educational standards movement up into the ranks of colleges and universities. As Generation Y enters the postsecondary education system, the pressure to produce skilled graduates ready to fill the shoes of retiring Boomers may lead to stricter accountability standards. This could have important implications for the overarching philosophy of higher education, which has traditionally been geared toward personal development and creative thinking rather than specific skill criteria. Additional pressure for accountability in higher education may come from the state legislators who allocate funds for public postsecondary education and who also feel political pressure both from employers and standards advocates.

Resources For More Information

Associations/Websites

- Association for Institutional Research, www.airweb.org/
- Council for Advancement and Support of Education, www.case.org/
- Granthelp, www.jointogether.org/plugin.jhtml?siteID=GRANTHELP&P=1
- Grantsmanship Center, www.tgci.com/
- Grantwriters.com, grantwriters.com/