

Career Opportunities in State and Local Government

Opportunities in state and local governments cover a wide range of interest areas. Governments need and hire individuals to work on a broad range of issues and with diverse constituents. Some of the common areas in which state and local government employees' work include: program management and evaluation, social services, healthcare, human resources, public relations, economic development, financial management, urban/town planning, and policy making. State and local government employees may be elected, appointed, or hired through traditional means.

According to the National Association of Counties, there are 3,066 counties in the United States, and 48 states have operational county governments. Connecticut and Rhode Island do not have functioning governments, although they are divided into geographic regions called counties.

The National Association of Towns and Townships reports that there are approximately 39,000 general purpose local governments in the United States, 85 percent of local governments have a population under 10,000 and nearly half have fewer than 1,000 residents. Nearly one quarter of all Americans live in rural areas and another quarter in cities.

State governments encompass policy issues related to agriculture and rural policy, education, environment, fiscal management, health, infrastructure, and public safety and justice.

Management. State and local government managers bring management experience, technical knowledge, academic training and a commitment to public service to the community they serve. Within the states, cities, and counties they have various titles including city manager, county administrator, state administrator, town manager, and chief administrative officer. Their basic mandate at both the state and local levels is to provide public services to the community effectively and efficiently.

According to the International City/County Management Association, an increasing number of cities and counties are run by a combination of appointed administrators and elected officials. Council-manager government is the most common form of government and includes a group (usually 5) of elected individuals and a professional manager hired by the council to implement their policies.

Managers organize and provide direction for a team of administrators and staff who together develop programs and deliver services to the public. State and local government managers work to implement the policies of the elected official – mayor, governor, council members. Specific responsibilities are highly dependent upon the size and needs of the community for which they work. Among the typical responsibilities are: meeting with elected officials, hiring and training administrators, implement laws and policies and ensuring they are upheld, investigating citizen concerns, soliciting bids from government contractors for building and development, and managing the day-to-day operations of the city, county, or state operations.

(from ICMA, Local Government Management: It's the Career for You).

Career Paths and Entry Salaries

City/county management, planning, economic development, budget analysis, fiscal management, administrative services, social services, health services are all potential career paths in state and local government. Salaries range widely depending on your geographic area and expertise. Entry level salaries for master's degree graduates are highly dependent on the location and job function. Here are the average salaries for some common positions: city managers - \$50,000; budget analysts - \$45, 000; management interns - \$45,000; program managers - \$40,000.

Qualifications Necessary/Application Procedures to Enter Field

Because the goal of government officials is to provide public services, it is essential for anyone entering the field to have a demonstrated commitment to making a difference. A strong sense of integrity and ethics as well as administrative and leadership abilities is also essential. Work in state and local government requires the ability to enforce established policies and regulations, to communicate effectively with a range of constituents and colleagues, and to work well under pressure. While a bachelor's degree may prepare and qualify you for some entry-level positions, a master's degree in public administration is recommended for mid- and high-level positions.

To locate specific career opportunities, contact the human resources office of the cities, counties, and states you would like to work for. Often a visit to the website for that geographic location will lead you to concrete information about opportunities available. Also, many states, cities, and counties offer established full-time management training programs (often referred to as internships). These are ideal opportunities for individuals seeking a career in management who need to gain professional experience. To learn more about these opportunities refer to the handout State and Local Government Management Training Programs located in the Career and Alumni Services library.

The job outlook in state and local governments is reflective of the current economic condition of a given state, county or city as well as the federal government. Relocation may be necessary if you seek more responsibility or leadership opportunities.

Sample Employers

- District of Columbia
- Fairfax County, Virginia
- New York State Presidential Management Internship
- City of Phoenix, Arizona
- City of Long Beach, California
- Onondaga County, New York
- Miami-Dade County, Florida
- City of Savannah, Georgia
- City of Kansas City, Missouri
- Clark County, Nevada
- State of California Senate Internship Fellowship Program

Note: All 50 states as well as counties and cities nation-wide employ individuals to work at the state and local levels in a wide range of positions.

Demand and Future Challenges of Profession

State and local governments are facing a crisis of talent. As baby boomers retire, there is an

increasing need to attract and train the next generation to assume professional roles in government service. The most significant challenge faced by state and local governments is in attracting these new professionals to the field. Many governments have addressed this need by creating management training programs. These programs are full-time paid opportunities to gain leadership skills and knowledge of how state and local governments operate. Programs last between 6 months and 2 years and are located across the country.

Resources For More Information

Websites

- Careers in Government Management - www.careersingovernment.com
- Government Jobs - www.govtjobs.com
- State and Local Government on the Net - www.statelocalgov.net/index.cfm
- Great Lakes Commission (IL, ID, NY, PA, WI, MI, OH, MO) - www.glc.org/
- Delaware River Basin (NY, NJ, DE, PA)- www.state.nj.us/drbc/
- Multi-State Tax Commission - www.mtc.gov/
- Appalachian Regional Commission (AL, GA, KY, MD, MS, NY, NC, OH, PA, SC, TN, VA, WV) - www.arc.gov/
- Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana Regional Council of Governments- www.oki.org/
- Waterfront Commission of New York Harbor (NY, NJ) www.waterfrontcommission.org
- Capitolimpact Gateway - http://www.ciclt.net/sn/ct/capitolimpact/gw_default.aspx

Associations

- American Association of Port Authorities - www.aapa-ports.org/
- American Planning Association - www.planning.org/
- American Society for Public Administration - www.aspanet.org/
- Council of State Governments www.csg.org/csg/default
- International City/County Management Association - www.icma.org
- International Personnel Management Association - www.ipma-hr.org/
- National Association for County Community and Economic Development - www.nacced.org/
- National Association of Counties - www.naco.org/
- National Association of Regional Councils - www.narc.org/
- National Association of State Budget Officers - www.nasbo.org/
- National Association of Towns and Townships(NATaT) - www.natat.org/
- National Civic League - www.ncl.org/
- National Conference of State Legislatures - www.ncsl.org/
- National Governors' Association - www.nga.org/
- National League of Cities - www.nlc.org/
- U.S. Conference of Mayors - www.usmayors.org/

Directories

State Yellow Book

Municipal Yellow Book

Publications

- State and Local Government Management Training Programs (Maxwell CAS handout)
- The Book of the States - www.csg.org/CSG/Products/default.htm

Spectrum: The Journal of State Governments