
CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN INTERNATIONAL, STATE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Description of the Field

There can be no single description of positions in state and local government; most states have agencies that are analogous to those at the federal level. Positions are as varied as the states and localities they serve. International concerns are relatively new to this field, but are gaining in importance. State and local governments do offer unique international opportunities. Such positions combine local economic issues with international development activities, and often allow employees to avoid the sometimes tiring aspects of international careers, such as living abroad and transfers.

Typical Entry-Level Positions and Salaries

Intern programs (full-time, paid; eligible for individuals graduating from master's programs) are very important in state/local government. Such programs include: the California Executive Fellows Program, the California State Senate Fellows Program and the Jesse Marvin Unruh California Assembly Program, as well as city management intern programs. In New York State, starting salaries range from high 30's to mid 50's.

Because this field covers such a broad spectrum of positions, there is no typical career path. There is movement between state, local and federal governments, as well as between government and private industry into their offices of governmental relations.

Demand

Most positions in state and local governments are filled by residents of the state or locality. If a particular skill is needed, however, they will recruit from outside the area. Currently three-fourths of all state and local jobs are in local government such as counties, municipalities, towns and school districts. One-half of all jobs are in educational services, followed closely by health services.

State and local governments have increasingly become involved in international affairs. Many have their own foreign policies involving: Trade Promotion, Tourism, Local Economic Development, Immigration and International Shipping. There is a growing need for financial specialists in many substantive areas of state government. In environmental protection, for example, as federal grant money declines there is an increasing use of complex financial schemes for waste disposal systems.

In economic development a growing number of states are establishing revolving loan and loan guarantee programs, venture capital funds, and other financing vehicles. State legislatures also employ financial analysts. One major international program focuses on export promotion. State development agencies, Departments of Commerce and other departments within State governments often provide valuable assistance to exporters with the state, such as: Export Education, Marketing Assistance, Market Development, Trade Mission and Trade Shows. Another large program promotes foreign direct investment in the state or region. Area chambers of commerce and economic development agencies, as well as some public utilities, are very active in this area.

Qualifications Necessary to Enter the Field

Bachelor's degree required. Master's degree will make a candidate more competitive. Applicant should have relevant internship or work experience. Federal government experience is viewed favorably.

Sample Group of Employers

Business & Industry	Local (City & Country)
Chambers of Commerce	Offices of Bi-national Affairs/Transborder Affairs
Commerce Departments	Planning & Policy
Economic Development	Public Utilities - Investment
Environmental Protection/Resources	Secretary of State
Executive Branches	Tourism
Food & Agriculture	Trade Offices - both in state and foreign
Industry & Trade	Trade Science & Technology
Legislative Branches	

Future Challenges to the Profession:

State and local agencies are highly constrained by their respective budgets. Many run on a shoe-string and are understaffed. Thus even though there is a need for internationally oriented personnel, budget concerns often make it impossible to hire. Therefore, functional skills and flexibility are essential in this area.

To Obtain More Information

Finding an international job with state and local governments requires a great deal of research and initiative. No directories or books outline state and local agencies with opportunities in international affairs. An initial source of information is the national and local branches of the World Affairs Council to uncover international positions with state and local agencies.

For state government positions, it may be helpful to contact the State Offices/Departments of Personnel or the State Job Service for information on current job listings and application procedures. Local city and county hiring is done primarily by the supervisors, managers and directors of the agencies. Some areas have a local Personnel Office.