



AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, D.C.

BUILDING A **BETTER** **TOMORROW**

Public Administration and Policy Careers

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A PRACTICAL FIELD OF STUDY

Competent policy experts and leaders in public service are vital to the success of their programs and organizations, whether they work in public administration, nonprofit roles, or in the private sector.

Through astute policy analysis, efficient management, and future-oriented planning, skilled public administrators can help improve outcomes in their communities through roles in transportation and the environment, housing, public health and safety, law and order, education, social services,

and more. Successful professionals in these roles need an education that demonstrates their ability to devise and analyze policies by forecasting potential effects and evaluating their impacts.

American University's online Master of Public Administration and Policy degree is designed to hone problem-solving skills across an array of public challenges, instill the necessary technical competencies, develop leadership capabilities, and teach students to explore the ethics behind complex decisions.

A PROGRAM BUILT FOR SUCCESS

The online Master of Public Administration and Policy program from American University's School of Public Affairs combines foundational knowledge and skills from its master's in public administration and master's in public policy degrees into one highly marketable credential. The culminating Policy Practicum capstone course provides students with exposure to the different dimensions of policy analysis and management in organizational settings.

Learn from expert faculty to acquire the knowledge and master important analytical skills that will prepare students to:

- **Analyze Administrative Problems and Craft Solutions:**
Apply knowledge of organizational management, leadership, structure and culture, human resource systems, and political and legal context of contemporary public service organizations.
- **Formulate, Evaluate, and Communicate Public Policy and Programs:** Use acquired analytic frameworks and methodological skills, including statistics, economics, and politics, while considering their responsiveness, accountability, effectiveness, and equity.
- **Incorporate a Range of Constitutional and Ethical Values:**
Integrate ethics and value systems into policy and administrative analysis and actions, including respect for the diversity of people and perspectives in the policy process.
- **Apply Acquired Skillsets, Expertise, and Values:**
Use new knowledge in real-world policy and organizational problems in a collaborative manner.
- **Leadership Skills, Insight, and Critical Thinking:**
Craft policies and monitor their implementation and success.

“

I was able to take key aspects from every course and apply them to the roles in my career. The faculty were all experts in their fields, and it was great to have them as resources throughout the program.

— Justin S.

Our **Master of Public Administration and Policy** program ensures students build real-world experience and a professional network to best serve them after graduation. Ranked the #9 best public affairs program and the #4 top public management and leadership program in 2025, this degree teaches students how they can excel in public services roles and enhance society, whether in their own communities, nationally, or globally.

By earning a degree in public administration and policy, students open the door to a wide variety of careers. Considering prior experience, specific skills, career goals, and passions can help determine which field is right after graduation. Below are some common career paths and what types of students may be most interested in each.

96% of American University graduates are either working or in grad school six months after graduation.*



*Results based on **current information**.



PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY

in the Public Sector

According to data from the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA), 50% of public administration and public policy master's degree graduates nationally go on to work for federal, state, or local governments.¹ Public administration applies to a variety of potential careers, including those in municipal, county, and state management, as well as in the federal government. Public administrators work in a wide range of sectors, including education, parks and recreation, social services, law and policy enforcement, utilities, transportation, sustainability, and urban planning.

At the local, state, and federal government levels, many career paths require the experience gained in

**American University's
School of Public
Affairs has produced
successful graduates
for over 90 years.**

a master's degree in public administration and policy or in a related field. While these roles include those listed above, additional roles exist at

the federal level, such as international relations, foreign aid, and border patrol.

Career Spotlights

Policy Analyst²

Policy analysts collect and research data related to organizational policies, estimate the effects of new proposed policies to make recommendations, evaluate existing programs, and communicate important information to public officials and other decision makers.

Environmental Policy Analyst³

Environmental policy analysts conduct research to tackle environmental challenges such as climate change, water pollution, and deforestation. They drive awareness to campaigns and inform new legislation and policy. Policy analysts do similar work in other policy areas, for example, education policy analysts may report on educational performance assessments and economic policy analysts track economic developments and shape associated policies.

Public Affairs Specialist⁴

Public affairs specialists work with the public, the media, and outside organizations to inform the public, shape the perception of their organization,

and highlight the services it offers. They conduct news conferences, distribute news releases, and may meet with the public alongside decision makers.

Public Health Administrator⁵

Public health administrators assess the health needs of the public to improve overall wellbeing. They develop outreach programs, manage healthcare facilities, and focus on practical, wide-ranging programs.

City Manager⁶

City managers oversee departments of the municipal government. They have a direct role in overseeing budgetary matters and often conduct research to find the most appropriate places to cut costs. In addition, they are responsible for day-to-day city operations.

Other titles include:

- City Planner
- Community Developer
- Community Health Specialist
- EMS Manager
- Government Official
- Legislator
- Program Evaluator

Relevant Courses

Students pursuing a **Master of Public Administration and Policy** will acquire key knowledge and skills for a career in public administration by studying legal and financial issues, organization management, project management, and human resources.

Courses including **Introduction to Public Administration and the Policy Process, Legal Issues in Public Administration, Foundations of Policy Analysis, Organizational Analysis, Managing Human Capital Assets, Budgeting and Financial Management, Project Management, and Foundations of Program Evaluation** will provide the competencies to:

- Analyze and resolve practical problems and decisions encountered by public managers.
- Manage projects and evaluate the effectiveness, efficiency, and budgetary implications of programs.
- Manage and lead employees in small and large public organizations with individual rights and duties in mind.
- Shape and influence organizations and their interactions with relevant stakeholders in the public and private sector.
- Develop and communicate sound advice for policymakers grounded in understanding the constitutional and legal context of public action.



PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY

in Nonprofits

The nonprofit sector is another common career path for graduates, with 22% going on to work at nonprofit organizations.¹ These organizations closely interact with government institutions to inform programs as stakeholders and as partners in the delivery of public services. Nonprofit employees often act as the face of public programs, which involves the ability to carefully analyze program performance.

Nonprofit work involves passion for specific causes, building relationships with government agencies, acquiring funding, and the ability to advocate for issues impacting the public. Skills that are beneficial while working for a nonprofit include strong written and verbal communication,

versatile management of human assets, financial literacy, fundraising, and program evaluation. Leadership roles often require a master's degree with associated knowledge and skills.

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I chose American University because it had the most robust offerings and the ranking. You're really able to apply everything that they teach you to whatever area that you decide to go into.

— Carly N.

Career Spotlights

Community Development Director⁷

Whether as a public or private employee, community development directors manage community partners. They work on initiatives and build partnerships to improve the quality of life for their communities, plan zoning guidelines, work on public safety initiatives, and more.

Grants Manager⁸

Grants managers generally work with nonprofit organizations to seek funding for research or other important nonprofit work. In addition to working with their teams and developing grant proposals to seek funding, they are responsible for determining the best ways for the funding to be used.

Policy Director⁹

Policy directors are senior leaders responsible for following, communicating, and advocating for policy developments with an organization's mission and policy goals in mind.

Nonprofit Director¹⁰

Nonprofit directors serve as leaders in their organizations by managing teams, communicating goals to the public, overseeing budgets, staffing, and more. These experts are often in public-facing roles and need to be strong public speakers.

Nonprofit CEO¹¹

Nonprofit CEOs are responsible for the highest level of leadership at larger nonprofit organizations. They oversee all employees and departments to make sure the organization is functioning effectively and efficiently.

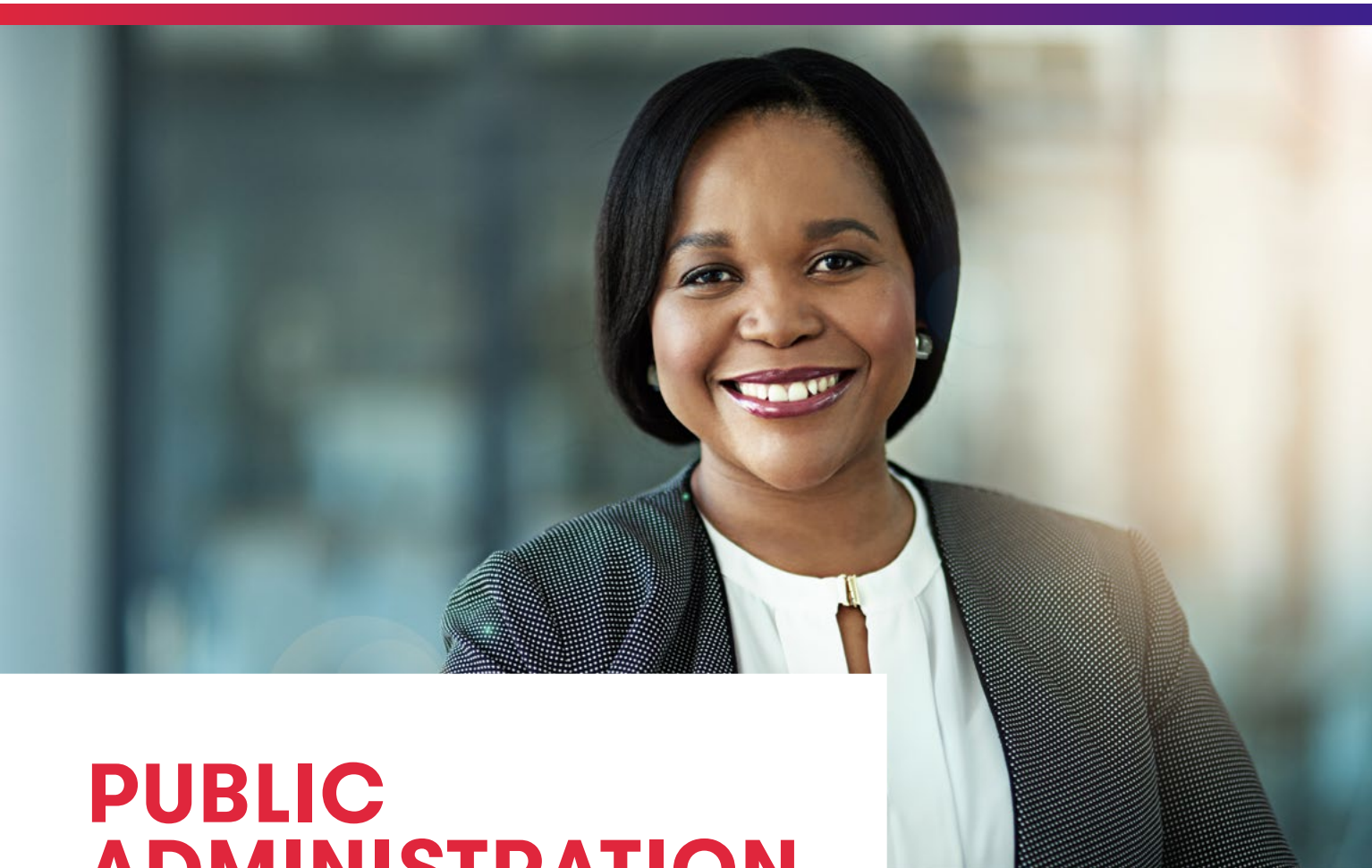
Other titles include:

- Advocacy Director
- Budgeting and Finance Manager
- Compliance Manager
- Director of Philanthropy
- Grant Writer
- Nonprofit Program Manager
- Public Relations Manager
- Project Manager

Relevant Courses

Master of Public Administration and Policy courses such as **Organizational Analysis**, **Managing Human Capital Assets**, **Budgeting and Financial Management**, **Foundations of Program Evaluation**, **Foundations of Policy Analysis**, and **Leadership in a Changing Workplace** are directly relevant to a successful career in the nonprofit sector. They cover the unique operational, developmental, financial, and managerial aspects of nonprofit management and help students learn to:

- Lead and manage an entire nonprofit organization, both its internal relations as well as its relations with stakeholders and government entities.
- Meet organizational nonprofit challenges inherent in delivering public services.
- Account for impact and performance of public program delivery.
- Navigate budgetary and financial constraints in the public sector.
- Execute performance reporting and compliance demands from funding institutions.
- Advocate for critical policy developments.



PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY

in the Private Sector

In addition to career opportunities in government and nonprofits, many public administration and policy graduates go on to work in similar roles at for-profit organizations and corporations. According to the NASPAA report, 21% of graduates continue in the private sector.¹

Graduates from American University's Master of Public Administration and Policy program work at companies such as Axios, Capital One, Amazon, AMC Networks, American Express, Bank of America, Boeing, CVS Health, and more.*

*Results based on [current information](#).

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Part of the reason why this program stood out to me was because it is both public administration as well as policy analysis. I think it has created a versatile degree opportunity and path forward for me that could really place me in any number of sectors of public administration.

— Zane C.

Career Spotlights

Public Affairs Specialist¹²

Public affairs specialists are responsible for developing and implementing communication strategies that inform and engage the public about the mission, vision, and values of an organization.

Management Analyst¹³

Management analysts develop strategies to improve the efficiency of their organizations. They do this through identifying problems and how to solve them by assessing regulatory impacts, analyzing data, projecting costs, and more.

Human Resources Manager¹⁴

Human resources managers direct, plan, and coordinate for organizations through working with the staff, organizing resources, and structuring activities. They also conduct trainings and oversee compensation and benefits.

Government Relations Specialist¹⁵

Government relations specialists monitor and inform about policy developments affecting organizations. They may work to influence public policy and government decisions by representing the interests of one's organization or corporation.

Compliance Officer¹⁶

Compliance officers work with the management and staff of their organizations to identify and manage regulatory risk. They review internal procedures for compliance with the law and with regulatory requirements.

Other titles include:

- Administrative Service Officer
- Foreign Policy Advisor
- Media and Corporate Communications Director
- Project Manager
- Proposal Writer
- Supply Chain Manager
- Trade and Customs Manager

Relevant Courses

Developing the critical thinking and leadership skills taught in this program will put students ahead as job candidates in many markets by developing legislative and regulatory acumen. Courses including **Project Management, Legal Issues in Public Administration, Managing Human Capital Assets, Organizational Analysis, Foundations of Policy Analysis, and Quantitative Methods** will help students learn to:

- Partner with government agencies and nonprofit organizations to carry out discrete operations in providing public services.
- Understand statute and case law, the delegation of legislative power, rulemaking, administrative appeals, and judicial review impacting industries and corporate strategies.

- Monitor and analyze policy developments to make recommendations about how policies and regulations may harm or benefit one's industry.
- Implement policies and managerial processes for human capital including staffing, human resource development, and classification in compliance with government regulations.
- Contextualize organizations and organizational behavior in relation to private markets and corporate priorities.
- Report about and inform private decisions in response to public policies by examining economic and financial data and by conducting statistical analysis.

A PROFESSIONAL DEGREE PATH

Whether students have a passion for improving the lives of people in their communities through nonprofit work, serving the public in government roles or elected office, or supporting a corporation's need to navigate government affairs and policies, a Master of Public Administration and Policy degree from American University can help them pursue their career goals.

Our graduates have gone on to great success across a broad range of fields with 35% working in nonprofit organizations, 38% working in the government, 27% working in for-profit organizations, and many going on to further their education.

35%

Working in
Nonprofit
Organizations

38%

Working in
Government

27%

Working in
For-Profit
Organizations

4%

Attending
Additional
Schooling

Discover your path to an exciting new career. [Learn more](#) and [apply today](#).



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