

Maxwell School Center for CAREER DEVELOPMENT

YOUR GUIDE TO GOVERNMENT RELATIONS & LOBBYING

OVERVIEW

Government relations, also known as lobbying, consists of individuals and organizations engaged in promoting the interests of their employers or clients. Their activities involve monitoring legislative and executive activities to influence policy, legislation, regulations, or negotiations, on behalf of governments, industries, specific companies, interest groups or constituencies. In Washington, DC, lobbying is regulated by law, calling for disclosure by lobbyists of organizations or clients they represent, LDA (Lobbying Disclosure Act) or FARA (Foreign Agents Registration Act).

Lobbying requires establishing your goals and agenda before meeting with the legislator, actively listening, building a relationship, and following up unanswered questions or with further information.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Most of those seeking careers in lobbying begin with volunteer work on political campaigns for elected public officials, or as legislative staff on Capitol Hill, in State Houses or in governmental agencies. With such experience, graduates can often move to the mid-level of organizations; without such experience, graduates will typically enter in the research area or in roles that support more senior staff.

Moving in and out of government, sometimes known as the “revolving door,” usually increases a person’s marketability in both the public sector and private sector. There are few straight line careers in lobbying as these positions are influenced by the ebb and flow of politics, or opportunities in the government. From a position as a research assistant, a person may become an analyst or manager within a lobbying organization or move to a position on the staff of an elected official or government agency.

TYPES OF JOBS

- Government affairs manager
- Political advocacy/engagement
- Federal relations specialist
- Government strategist
- Government relations

QUALIFICATIONS + SKILLS

- Excellent written and oral communication skills
- Strong interpersonal and relationship-building skills
- Active listening
- Understanding of policy processes
- Government experience is preferred

PRO TIP: Students interested in lobbying careers should consider volunteering on political campaigns or interning with a government agency. The contacts developed through volunteer work and experience in analyzing issues and understanding government processes, can be invaluable.

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SAMPLE EMPLOYERS

- **Public Relations Consultants**
 - Burson Marsteller
 - Edelman
 - Weber Shandwick
- **Law and Lobbying Firms**
 - Brownstein, Hyatt, Farber & Schreck
 - Hogan Lovells
 - Quinn Gillespie & Associates
 - Holland & Knight
 - EY
 - Williams & Jensen
 - Van Scoyoc Associates
 - Akin Gump
- **Political Parties**
 - Democratic National Committee
 - Republican National Committee
- **Public Interest Organizations**
 - ACLU
 - Children's Defense Fund
 - Common Cause
 - Innocence Project
 - Public Citizen
- **Trade and Professional Organizations**
 - AFL-CIO
 - National Federation of Independent Businesses Inc.
 - Parent-Teacher Association
 - American Federation of Teachers
 - State and local teacher's unions

SAMPLE MAXWELL CLASSES

- International Trade and Economic Negotiation
- Issues in Global Economic and Financial Security
- Business and Government in the Global Economy
- Central Challenges to National Security Law & Policy
- Governance and Global Civil Society
- Fund Development for Nonprofit Organizations
- Ethics and Public Policy

RESOURCES

- [OpenSecrets.org](https://www.opensecrets.org)
- [LobbyingFirms.com](https://www.lobbyingfirms.com)
- National Association of State Lobbyists
- [LobbyingJobs.com](https://www.lobbyingjobs.com)
- Public Affairs Council

RELATED CAREER GUIDES

- Public Diplomacy and Public Relations
- State and Local Government
- Consulting