Government and nonprofit careers may look very much like industry or academic careers. However the main difference is that these organizations are often working towards a specific mission. Government organizations and nonprofits need scientists, program coordinators, grants manager, and policy analysts.

**Alumni Spotlight**

**What did you do as a trainee to prepare for your current career?**

Critical thinking skills are critical to policy work. Fortunately, learning to think critically is a fundamental element of training in scientific research. Communication, both written and oral and at different levels for different audiences, is a core part of my job that I have had to strengthen and hone overtime. I would encourage trainees to take as many opportunities as possible to formally and informally present their research and to practice distilling complex information into a format understandable to the lay person. I would also encourage trainees to engage in activities outside of the lab. I volunteered with a few non-profit groups while at the University. Engaging in outside activities demonstrates multi-dimensionality to prospective employers. This is particularly helpful when trying to distinguish oneself from other scientists pursuing careers in the policy arena.

**What are the typical things your job entails each day?**

The mission of the health program at Environmental Defense Fund is to protect human health and the environment from harmful chemicals by reducing exposures to toxic substances and driving safer chemicals into the marketplace. Effective governmental and corporate policies as well as strong science are needed to achieve this mission. My job largely involves 1) communication with others internal and external to my organization about actions needed to make progress on complex, sometimes contentious scientific and policy issues related to chemicals, 2) heavy analysis of government activities related to chemicals ranging from how their safety is assessed to how they might be regulated, 3) developing corporate chemicals management frameworks and managing chemical innovation projects, and 4) engaging scientists on important issues relevant to our work.

**What is the most rewarding part of your job?**

Definitely a sense that my team's efforts, however challenged at times, are working to make the world a better place to live.

Interview courtesy of the University of Chicago.
Sample Job Titles

- Scientist/investigator/research associate
- Laboratory manager
- Study director
- Program manager/director
- Toxicologist/biologist/chemist/etc.
- Grants manager
- Policy analyst

Professional Organizations

National Council of Nonprofits (Council of Nonprofits)
http://www.councilofnonprofits.org/