

Policy analysts develop and implement public health policy, programmes and regulation.

A policy analyst may work on a specific public health issue or across the wider public health field.

Most policy analysts plan, research, write, and discuss and assess papers and reports.

Providing evaluation and informed commentary and feedback to others on a range of public health policy, such as proposed strategies or legislation, is often part of this role.

KEY TASKS FOR A POLICY ANALYST CAN INCLUDE:

- gathering, analysing and presenting information
- preparing policy and making recommendations
- managing projects, information and contracts
- media liaison.

Each role will have its particular emphasis, depending on the priorities of the organisation.

ACTIVITIES POLICY ANALYSTS MIGHT DO:

- help develop a wellbeing strategy in a territorial local authority
- prepare a submission on problem gambling for a government select committee
- analyse the literature on suicide prevention and propose specific strategies for developing future programmes
- help produce a government strategy paper on the future of public health.

Policy Analyst



What school subjects do you need?

You will need high marks in all NCEA subjects, especially English and mathematics.

What qualifications will you need?

You will need to hold a relevant qualification that relates to policy. This may be in public health, public policy, social policy, sociology, law, economics or any other discipline where you have done significant analytical work. You would also usually require knowledge in a relevant public health field.

Who employs public health policy analysts?

Non-government organisations, such as the New Zealand Aids Foundation, National Heart Foundation and Mental Health Foundation, often employ policy analysts, as do some local authorities and district health boards.

Policy analysts also work in many government departments including the Ministry of Health, the Accident Compensation Corporation and the Ministry of Social Development.

CAREER 8: POLICY ANALYST

KERIATA, Senior Policy Analyst, New Zealand Drug Foundation

KERIATA STUART (TE ATI AWA, TARANAKI) IS THE SENIOR POLICY ANALYST at the New Zealand Drug Foundation – a non-government organisation (NGO) based in Wellington.

Keriata says her role is difficult to pigeon-hole. It includes researching, monitoring issues, networking and information analysis to provide evidence-based policy advice about matters relating to alcohol and drugs, including tobacco. This work often forms the basis of submissions for shaping government policy and legislation. Keriata says one of the benefits of policy work is that the skills are easily transferable to different organisations.

She says that until relatively recently, many people, including her, were “accidental” policy analysts promoted into the newly established roles because of their research, analysis and writing skills. Today, however, it is possible to complete study in public policy and many people choose policy analysis as their career path.

Keriata is currently studying towards her Masters in Public Health. Her work has provided inspiration for her Master’s thesis which has a focus on Māori women, alcohol and pregnancy.

Keriata suggests that, while obtaining a relevant degree is the starting point for anyone wanting to pursue a career in policy analysis, it is really important to back that up with practical work experience. For Keriata, patience is a key personal attribute for policy analysts because it’s difficult to measure short term results. She says you need to take a long term view of your work and trust that you are positively influencing policy makers.

“More and more people doing post graduate studies are pursuing careers in policy analysis because it is so interesting and varied. For me doing policy work in an NGO is a really good option because my skills contribute to achieving important public health outcomes”

