

# POLITICS, POLICY, AND LOBBYING SKILLS PROFILE

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# SUMMARY

By reading this profile we hope that you can build a better understanding of whether seeking to develop politics, policy, and lobbying expertise seems like one of the best ways for you to use your time in order to help animals.



## **HOW DOES THIS WORK HELP ANIMALS**

You can encourage changes and improvements in legislation, regulation, and enforcement, redirect government spending, and shift social norms and attitudes in ways that are more favourable to animals.



## **WHO IS THIS WORK A GOOD FIT FOR**

Generalists with good communication skills, people skills, and critical thinking skills. You have to be willing to work with people who don't care about animals as much as you do.



## **HOW MUCH DO WE NEED MORE EXPERTISE IN THIS AREA**

We could benefit a lot from more people exploring some of the many promising opportunities in politics and policy. There are few lobbying roles in animal advocacy, though there could be more in the future.



## **WHAT OPTIONS WOULD YOU HAVE IF YOU WERE TO LEAVE THIS PATH**

There are lots of opportunities for switching between various roles in politics, policy, and lobbying. The generalist skills you develop could easily be applied to other animal advocacy roles.



## **HOW TO PREPARE FOR POLITICS, POLICY, AND LOBBYING ROLES**

Focus on building up relevant networks and getting your foot in the door as early as possible. Familiarity with politics and political institutions helps. Graduate degrees can be helpful, especially in law, economics, public policy, or political science. Sometimes specialist PhDs are necessary.

# INTRODUCTION

GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS CAN MAKE CHANGES THAT FOCUS ON ANIMAL WELFARE, ANIMAL-FREE FOODS, THE REGULATION OF ANIMAL PRODUCTS, OR WILD ANIMAL ISSUES.



So a career in politics — either as a politician or as a staff member — could give you an excellent platform to help animals. There are also less “political” roles within government institutions that still have an influence on the development, administration, or enforcement of policies, laws, and regulations. You certainly don’t have to work for a charity to advocate for animals, though some animal advocacy nonprofits do have roles focused on pressuring governments.

There’s a lot of overlap between the activities and required skills for people in these types of roles, so we’ve grouped them together in a single profile on politics, policy, and lobbying (PPL).

In this profile, we will share some insights with you from the experiences of people working in PPL (via 12 interviews), plus the findings of relevant academic research and our own research into animal advocacy nonprofits.

You can read more about our **methodology** [here](#).

# DOES THIS WORK HELP ANIMALS?

If you're interested in helping animals effectively through your career, you should prioritise work that has high potential for impact.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPACT IN POLITICS

Politicians have various opportunities to propose, encourage, discourage, or veto new legislation. Consider, for example, the efforts of US Senator Cory Booker to [put an end](#) to some of the most intensive forms of animal agriculture in the US, or the 2019 [Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture Act](#), passed without opposition through the US Congress and signed into law by President Donald Trump. Support staff may be able to affect politicians' actions in these areas. A study of lobbying in the US has found that politicians are often actively involved in policy advocacy for particular causes.<sup>1</sup>



[Cory Booker](#) is a US politician who has proposed a major bill to restrict factory farming in the US.

There is anecdotal, historical evidence that individual politicians can make a difference to whether legislation is passed or not.<sup>2</sup> Some [social science research](#) has also found that political leaders can have substantial effects on political and economic outcomes.

## REDIRECTING GOVERNMENT SPENDING

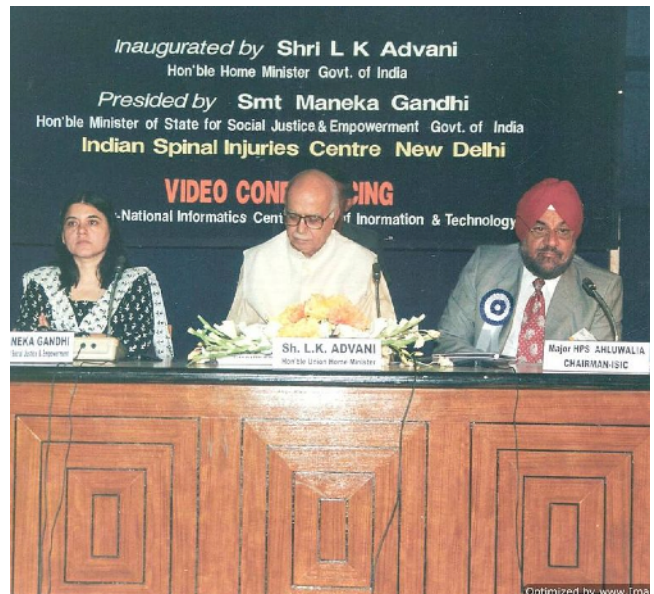
A few years ago, 80,000 Hours [conducted](#) a brief analysis of “the chances of an Oxford PPE graduate succeeding as a politician” and roughly estimated that “such a student can expect to be able to direct £7.5 – 75 million to the causes they support from their chances of making it into elected office.”<sup>3</sup>



## SHIFTING SOCIAL NORMS AND ATTITUDES

Politicians and support staff might also be able to help animals by making consideration of animals' interests seem more normal and mainstream in politics. As Raphaël Podselver of ProVeg suggested to us, for people in these career paths, “even taking the vegetarian or vegan choice at lunch” and having a conversation with colleagues could help to shift perspectives a little, perhaps influencing their stance on animal issues.<sup>4</sup> There may be possibilities to create and support political institutions that help to protect and encourage pro-animal attitudes, such as the [Congressional Animal Protection Caucus](#) in the US and the All-Party Parliamentary Groups on [vegetarianism and veganism](#) and [animal welfare](#) in the UK.

Individuals in political roles may also sometimes be able to use their position to encourage change in public opinion, too, such as by engaging with the media.<sup>5</sup>



[Maneka Gandhi](#) is an Indian politician and animal rights activist who has encouraged government action to help animals.

## SECURING SUPPORTIVE CANDIDATES

Given these opportunities for impact in political roles, helping to get an animal-friendly candidate into office could also be effective.<sup>6</sup>



# OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPACT IN POLICY

There are many policy roles within government institutions that aren't as explicitly "political." The opportunities depend on the institutional setup in the country, but these are often roles in the bureaucracy of the "executive branch" of government or the civil service.

Opportunities for helping large numbers of animals could arise from fleshing out the details of policies, such as through offering better tariffs for high welfare animal products in new trade agreements, or slightly increasing the minimum space requirements for farmed animals.<sup>7</sup>

There might not be much opportunity for explicit "advocacy" for animals through this sort of policy tinkering. However, three employees of the UK's Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) that we spoke to estimated that there were between 30 and 50 employees in DEFRA that worked on animal welfare issues;<sup>8</sup> another estimated "dozens."<sup>9</sup> It seems plausible that an influx of a small number of new employees who were highly motivated to prioritise positive outcomes for animals might substantially shift the culture in the institution, thereby affecting policy decision-making and implementation.<sup>10</sup> The situation could be similar in other countries, though our interviewee at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) noted that, if you include field workers (as opposed to just analysts and policy workers), the USDA had around 100,000 employees.<sup>11</sup>



Before working as a campaign manager for Humane Society International, Alexandra Clark was a management assistant to a vice-president in the European Parliament.





# OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPACT IN LOBBYING



Camilla Olesen is Head of Political Affairs at Anima, coordinating lobbying and policy efforts that improve animal welfare and encourage growth in plant-based foods.

Advocates can help animals if they manage to persuade politicians to support favourable new legislation and regulation or protect and enforce favourable existing legislation.<sup>12</sup> Although lobbying has not been thoroughly evaluated by researchers focused on animal advocacy strategy, there are some promising initial findings.<sup>13</sup>

A [study](#) of lobbying efforts on a large number of policy issues in the US found that 41% of the issues in the sample saw some policy change during the four years of the research (though the policy change was not necessarily always due to lobbying).<sup>14</sup> [Other studies](#) have identified evidence of effectiveness; where lobbying has sought to affect financial

outcomes, some studies suggest returns worth tens or hundreds of times as much as the money spent on lobbying.

However, [some lobbying is ineffective](#). The resources of the animal agriculture industry far outweigh those of the farmed animal movement, so the industry tends to [outspend](#) animal advocates on lobbying.<sup>15</sup> Lobbying can also be counterproductive; failed advocacy efforts could entrench attitudes<sup>16</sup> or reduce the credibility of other advocates.<sup>17</sup>

## INSIDER VS. OUTSIDER ROUTES TO POLITICAL CHANGE

If animal advocates want to change legislation, they can take a number of approaches. There is a range of interventions from seeking to enter roles that can influence policy from within government institutions to organising mass public protests to pressure politicians. Pressure from professional lobbyists falls somewhere between these extremes. The animal advocacy movement probably needs to use the full range of these interventions, in order to influence various stages of the policy process.<sup>18</sup> On a similar note, we don't think that animal advocates should abandon all efforts to shift public opinion,<sup>19</sup> but direct efforts to push legislative change should play a key part in the strategy of the animal advocacy movement. Of course, the





movement's overall strategic needs should not be your only consideration in your career strategy, since factors like "[personal fit](#)" are also crucial.

Our interviewees believed that there was a lot of similarity in the opportunities for impact in insider and outsider roles.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, insiders and outsiders can be effective in helping each other.<sup>21</sup>

An important consideration in favour of taking insider roles is the idea of "[replaceability](#)." If you don't apply for political or policy roles, often the person who gets the job instead won't be as focused as you on using their position to help animals. So that role probably won't do much good for animals unless *you* get it. And while you do that role, your salary will come from taxpayers, not the limited funds of the animal advocacy movement. By comparison, for every lobbying role at an animal advocacy nonprofit, there will probably be a lot of applicants focused on helping animals. So, although there are some [other positive indirect effects](#), most of the benefit for animals from you securing that role will come from the difference between your skills as a lobbyist and the skills of the next best candidate, which might not be very much if the application is competitive.

## POLICY MAKING VS. POLICY ADMINISTRATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Several interviewees were concerned that some roles may be highly bureaucratic and lack the flexibility to have a positive impact.<sup>22</sup> This suggests that, if you are considering policy careers, it is especially important to be strategic in the specific roles that you take.<sup>23</sup> This also seems to make the case for political and lobbying roles seem stronger than the case for roles in policy administration and implementation.

# DOES THE POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT DEPEND ON THE COUNTRY AND TYPE OF GOVERNMENT?

A [report on careers in politics and policy in Germany](#) has many similarities to the findings from the research and interviews in this skills profile, which mostly focused on the US, UK, and international institutions. However, there are some differences.<sup>24</sup> For example, “the executive branch dominates policy-making in Germany,” whereas the UK civil service has a less dominant role. Indeed, the balance of power between different parts of government seems likely to vary substantially by country, which affects which specific roles are most promising.

In less democratic political systems, policy-makers pay less attention to public preferences, but are more able to introduce sudden and radical policy change without opposition.<sup>25</sup> Although there are likely still some ways for nonprofits to help animals in these countries,<sup>26</sup> this makes insider government careers seem relatively more promising than outsider advocacy routes for encouraging policy change.<sup>27</sup>

Our guess is that, despite national differences, political or policy careers will often still be promising options. For example, India has some quite generous laws affecting animals, but [these laws are not often enforced](#). Strong external pressure on companies and governments could help to enforce animal protection laws, but it seems likely that government insiders could also play a useful role.<sup>28</sup>

In local politics, the potential for impact will also vary. For example, some [states](#) and [cities](#) have much larger populations than others.

# WILL YOU HAVE GOOD PERSONAL FIT WITH POLITICS, POLICY, AND LOBBYING ROLES?

THE INFORMATION IN THIS SECTION IS INTENDED TO HELP YOU ASSESS WHETHER YOU WILL HAVE GOOD PERSONAL FIT WITH PPL ROLES. YOUR “[PERSONAL FIT](#)” WITH A ROLE OR CAREER PATH IS HOW WELL-SUITED YOU ARE TO IT AND YOUR CHANCES OF REALLY EXCELLING AT IT. WE THINK THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS IN [IMPACT-FOCUSED CAREER STRATEGY](#).



If you already have substantial policy or political expertise and are reading this profile to decide whether you should seek to apply your expertise to animal advocacy, you might like to skip this section.



# WHAT DO PEOPLE WORKING IN THIS AREA DO?

We [asked our interviewees](#), “What does a typical day involve?” Their replies included:

POLITICS	POLICY	LOBBYING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Engaging with the media.</li> <li>› Communication with various other institutions and employees involved in government.</li> <li>› Communication with constituents and the general public.</li> <li>› Communication and outreach to relevant professionals and potential advocacy allies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Meetings, including any management responsibilities.</li> <li>› Research into relevant problems.</li> <li>› Engaging with other departments to build agreement behind policy proposals.</li> <li>› Cost-benefit analyses.</li> <li>› Time for “pet projects” that are more directly relevant to animal advocacy efforts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Mobilising supporters and activists.</li> <li>› Campaign planning and research.</li> <li>› Engaging with the media.</li> <li>› Engaging with supportive legislators, staffers, and policy-makers, such as providing them with information on forthcoming topics, or seeking their help on specific issues.</li> <li>› Engaging with and project managing other supportive stakeholders, including other nonprofits, to coordinate action.</li> <li>› Actively lobbying to encourage the passage of specific legislation.</li> <li>› Organising events to encourage discussion and political interest.</li> <li>› Drafting, editing, and submitting formal public comments and feedback on laws or regulations.</li> </ul>



We only had a few interviewees for each of these three categories, so their replies won't cover all of the activities for people in PPL roles. Further information can be found in the various profiles by 80,000 Hours on politics and policy.<sup>29</sup>

Lobbyists don't spend all their time doing direct lobbying. For example, Courtney Fern of the Nonhuman Rights Project noted that "about 30 to 40%" of her time was spent "lobbying or working with government officials and policy makers."

The following table, from a [study](#) of policy advocacy, gives a sense of the frequency of different types of tasks and actions; the percentages represent the proportion of lobbyist interviewees who reported using a particular type of action:

Tactic	Status quo defenders (%)	Status quo challengers (%)	All sides (%)
<b>Inside advocacy</b>			
Personal contact with rank-and-file members of Congress or staff*	73.3	85.3	80.6
Work with legislative allies***	56.7	76.8	69.0
Disseminate in-house research to policy makers	65.0	59.0	61.3
Personal contact with majority committee/subcommittee member or staff	56.7	63.2	60.7
Personal contact with majority committee/subcommittee leadership or staff	48.3	57.9	54.2
Personal contact with minority committee/subcommittee member or staff**	43.3	60.0	53.6
Send letter/fax to member of Congress or staff	51.7	53.7	52.9
Personal contact with minority committee/subcommittee leadership or staff	45.0	46.3	45.8
Disseminate external research to policy makers	53.3	41.1	45.8
Personal contact with agency official	45.0	40.0	41.9
Outreach/coalition building	36.7	41.1	39.4
Draft legislative language***	23.3	48.4	38.7
Testify at congressional hearing	40.0	31.6	34.8
Hire consultants to help with lobbying	28.3	36.8	33.6
Submit written comments to agency	31.7	22.1	25.8
Personal contact with White House official	15.0	21.1	18.7
Work with agency allies	16.7	19.0	18.1
Personal contact with majority leadership or staff	15.0	15.8	15.5
Testify at agency hearing	18.3	12.6	14.8
Draft regulatory language	11.7	11.6	11.6
Work with White House allies	6.7	13.7	11.0
<b>Outside advocacy</b>			
Press conferences/press releases	35.0	34.7	34.8
Public education/relations campaign**	8.3	22.1	16.8
Op-ed/opinion pieces	11.7	14.7	13.6
Pay for ads	15.0	12.6	13.6
Disseminate in-house research to the public	8.3	12.6	11.0
<b>Grassroots advocacy</b>			
Mobilize mass membership	40.0	52.6	47.7
Mobilize elite membership	15.0	22.1	19.4
Organize a lobby day	15.0	20.0	18.1
Mobilize general public*	11.7	22.1	18.1
Number of sides	60	95	155

Notes: Entries show the percentage of sides using each type of tactic. Tactics were coded solely for the organizational advocates who were interviewed (i.e., government officials were not included in our enumeration of tactics).

\*Difference between defenders and challengers is statistically significant at  $p < .10$ .

\*\*Difference between defenders and challengers is statistically significant at  $p < .05$ .

\*\*\*Difference between defenders and challengers is statistically significant at  $p < .01$ .

Lobbyists at smaller organisations tend to have more varied, generalist roles, whereas lobbyists with larger policy teams might have more specialised roles.<sup>30</sup> Lobbying roles would presumably look quite different at the different sorts of organisations that you might work at; groups focused on grassroots advocacy, face-to-face lobbying, and policy-focused research might offer quite different experiences.<sup>31</sup>

# WHAT MAKES GREAT CANDIDATES FOR POLITICS, POLICY, AND LOBBYING ROLES?

We checked with our [interviewees](#) and several other sources what makes people great in PPL roles.<sup>32</sup>

GREAT POLITICIANS AND POLITICAL SUPPORT WORKERS...	GREAT POLICY WORKERS AND CIVIL SERVANTS...	GREAT LOBBYISTS...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Have good social skills and are able to connect people to make progress on shared goals.</li> <li>› Are good at public speaking.</li> <li>› Are persuasive.</li> <li>› Can write well.</li> <li>› Have the desire to get things done.</li> <li>› Are hard-working.</li> <li>› Can work independently, with low amounts of structure and support.</li> <li>› Are able to complement the skillset of the politicians or support staff that they work with.</li> <li>› Can manage social media.</li> <li>› Are loyal to those that they work with.</li> <li>› Are willing to stand out from the crowd and take risks to get ahead.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Are efficient and effective.</li> <li>› Have good social skills and are able to build consensus.</li> <li>› Have good analytical and critical thinking skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Are resilient and determined to keep going, despite rejections and indifference.</li> <li>› Are comfortable talking to people and have good people skills.</li> <li>› Are persuasive.</li> <li>› Understand the set-up of key players and institutions, plus the division of power and responsibilities between them.</li> <li>› Have good critical thinking skills.</li> <li>› Have good writing skills.</li> <li>› Are passionate about the cause.</li> <li>› Are knowledgeable about the topic area and use relevant evidence to support their claims.</li> <li>› Are able to talk to and find common ground with stakeholders with different priorities and beliefs to you.</li> </ul>

Several interviewees emphasised the idea of needing to seek out non-obvious opportunities for impact.<sup>33</sup> So independence, creativity, and entrepreneurialism may be helpful in policy and politics.

There also seems to be a distinction between more or less technical PPL roles, with the skills differing somewhat. People skills seem more important to generalist PPL roles, whereas technical knowledge and qualifications may be crucial for more specialist lobbying, policy-making, or regulatory roles.<sup>34</sup>

## ARE THERE ANY OTHER REASONS YOU MIGHT OR MIGHT NOT BE A GOOD FIT?

- ▶ A very common theme in our interviews was that, for PPL roles, you have to be willing to work in an environment where your colleagues are not (all) motivated to help animals.<sup>35</sup> This could be socially and emotionally draining.
- ▶ What's more, in policy and political roles, you have to be willing to accept that you'll be working for an institution that regulates and maintains animal agriculture in your country.
- ▶ Several interviewees also noted that, since policy change can be slow, it's important to be patient and be willing to work on an issue for several years without seeing much tangible progress.<sup>36</sup> You may have to spend substantial amounts of time working on topics that have little relevance to animals or no opportunities for impact.<sup>37</sup>
- ▶ Politics and policy careers are riskier than some other career options; there's a chance of amazingly high impact, but there's also a risk that you will never be able to achieve very much for animals.<sup>38</sup>
- ▶ One positive of civil service and policy administration careers is that the work-life balance seems likely to be quite good, staying close to a standard 40 hour working week.<sup>39</sup> In contrast, our impression is that political roles can involve high time commitments beyond usual working hours.<sup>40</sup>
- ▶ Civil service and policy administration roles seem likely to be a good back-up option, perhaps later in your career, especially if you have a generalist skillset but do not have good personal fit for nonprofit roles. However, entering late in your career seems to be [difficult in Germany](#).
- ▶ On a more practical note, 80,000 Hours [note](#) that "US Government jobs have substantially lower pay than corporate options" and "most jobs are located in Washington, D.C., so you'll probably need to move to get a good job if you live outside D.C." Though there may be opportunities to work in local or state politics, many PPL opportunities will be clustered around capital cities.



## HOW CAN YOU ASSESS YOUR PERSONAL FIT?

- ▶ Look honestly at your previous success in related work that uses the skills described above. Introspection on your preferences and personality could also be helpful.
- ▶ Look at your interest and performance in relevant subjects, such as political science.<sup>41</sup>
- ▶ Join party-affiliated youth or student groups.<sup>42</sup>
- ▶ Get involved politically as a citizen, such as by joining local community politics or governing institutions.
- ▶ Get involved in grassroots political campaigns organised by others, lobbying your legislators on relevant issues, and building up your understanding of how other organisations run campaigns.<sup>43</sup>
- ▶ More broadly, get involved with grassroots animal advocacy — this can teach you how to talk about relevant issues to people who see them as less important than you do.<sup>44</sup> You could focus especially on tasks that require similar skills to PPL roles, such as campaigning or [fundraising](#).<sup>45</sup>
- ▶ Ask for a meeting with a political representative and do independently organised lobbying.<sup>46</sup>
- ▶ Rather than seeking to lobby them, you could focus more on trying to meet the needs of a politician and becoming their trusted adviser.<sup>47</sup>
- ▶ Volunteer for the political campaigns of candidates for legislative roles (e.g. members of Congress) or executive positions (e.g. mayors, governors, or presidents).<sup>48</sup>
- ▶ Practice reading about a topic and writing up a report as if it was for a minister.<sup>49</sup>
- ▶ Look for internships and entry schemes into PPL roles.<sup>50</sup>



# WHAT IS THE SITUATION LIKE CURRENTLY IN THE ANIMAL ADVOCACY MOVEMENT?

A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE LANDSCAPE OF THE ANIMAL ADVOCACY MOVEMENT MIGHT HELP YOU UNDERSTAND SOME PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF WHETHER YOU ARE WELL-SUITED TO WORK IN THIS AREA.



It's also important for understanding how your strengths compare to other members of the animal advocacy movement who might plausibly do similar roles. This determines your [comparative advantage](#) — the job or path that is highest-impact for you, taking into account the possibility of coordination with others in the animal advocacy movement. This is something we can talk through with you if you apply for a [one-to-one careers advice call](#) with us.



# HOW MUCH DOES THE MOVEMENT NEED MORE EXPERTISE IN THIS AREA?

Members of the animal advocacy movement seem to believe that expertise in politics, policy, and lobbying is an important bottleneck in the animal advocacy movement at the moment:

- ▶ In our short initial [survey and interviews](#) with 12 CEO's and hiring professionals from 9 of the "top" or "standout" charities currently or formerly recommended by Animal Charity Evaluators, 5 respondents selected "government" as "the biggest talent gap in the animal movement." Another 2 respondents selected "legal," which might partly overlap with politics, policy, and lobbying.<sup>51</sup>
- ▶ We also conducted a survey that had 29 respondents from various animal advocacy organisations, in a variety of positions. This had asked the same question; "government" was, again, the most commonly selected option, with 8 selections.<sup>52</sup>
- ▶ In a 2019 [survey](#) of effective altruism (EA) organisations by the Centre for Effective Altruism, "Government and policy experts" was rated as the most needed skill or ability for "EA as a whole." Importantly, however, Animal Charity Evaluators and the Good Food Institute were the only included organisations that focused primarily on animal issues, representing 3 out of 29 listed respondents. Using similar methodology, 80,000 Hours' surveys from [2018](#) and [2017](#) had found similar results. 80,000 have [noted](#) that there are many limitations of these results.<sup>53</sup>

There is evidence suggesting that politics, policy, and lobbying expertise is not currently needed extensively within paid roles in animal advocacy nonprofits:

- ▶ Animal Charity Evaluators found that the largest US farmed animal advocacy organisations only [spent](#) 7% of their resources on influencing policy and the law in 2016.<sup>54</sup>
- ▶ In our [spot-check](#) of 27 animal advocacy organisations, we found that only around 5% of roles in effective animal advocacy nonprofits seem to be specifically focused on "Government, policy, lobbying, or legal" tasks with only 14 (2%) clearly focused on lobbying.
- ▶ In the first of our two surveys mentioned above, no respondents mentioned anything to do with politics, policy, or lobbying in response to a question asking "Which roles are the hardest to fill for?"<sup>55</sup>

- ▶ In response to questions about which traits participants thought “were most influential to getting [them] hired” in their current role and which traits they thought made them “successful” in their current role, no respondents to the second of our two surveys mentioned above discussed anything specific to politics, policy, or lobbying.<sup>56</sup>
- ▶ In CEA and 80,000 Hours’ surveys of effective altruism organisations, “Government and policy experts” were rated much lower for the extent to which they were the “most needed skill” for “my organisation” (aggregated across the respondents), as opposed to for the EA movement as a whole.<sup>57</sup>

However, PPL expertise may be more needed for roles in animal advocacy nonprofits in the near future.<sup>58</sup>

More importantly, we’d only expect those working in “lobbying” out of “politics, policy, and lobbying” to be employed directly by nonprofits. That is, much of the important work for animal advocates developing this general category of expertise will probably be done while working directly in politics or in public bureaucracies. Our impression is that few people currently work in government and policy roles with a targeted focus on supporting the animal advocacy movement,<sup>59</sup> but there are thousands of possible roles worldwide.

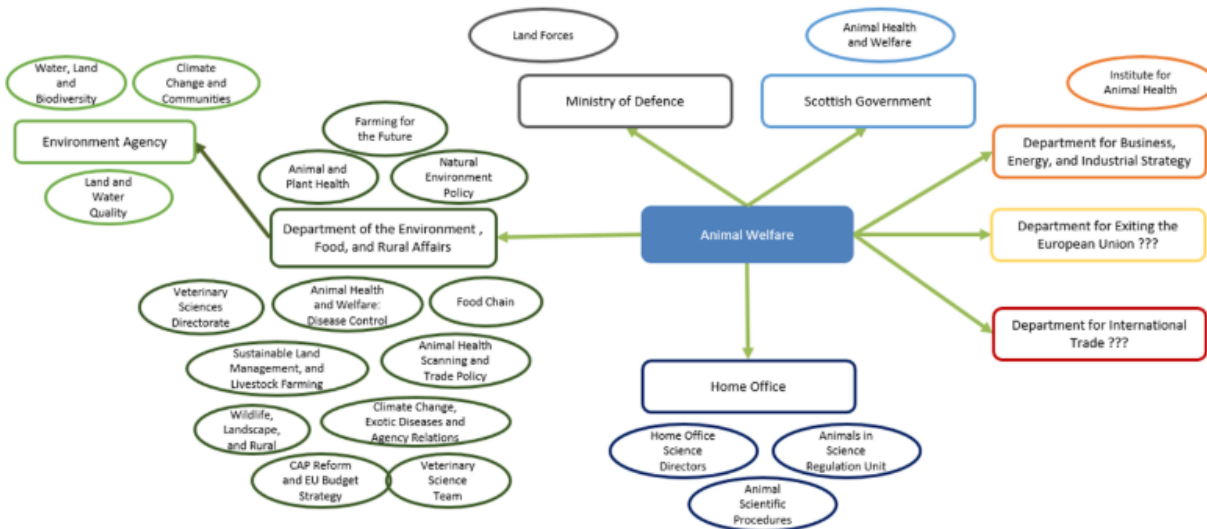
Overall, we think that, ideally, more animal advocates should be focusing on developing PPL expertise than is currently the case.





# WHERE CAN YOU FIND ROLES?

Every national government presumably has at least a handful of full-time policy roles focusing on farmed animal issues. For example, there are several possible UK civil service [opportunities](#) relating to animal welfare:



There will presumably be equivalent options in other countries, though there may be one department that is most obviously relevant, such as DEFRA in the UK, the USDA in the US, and the Federal Ministry for Food and Agriculture in Germany.

We haven't looked into the number or competitiveness of politics and policy roles in different countries, but including assistants, staffers, local politicians, and non-political policy staff can make the total number quite high.<sup>60</sup>

By contrast, our [spot-check](#) of 27 animal advocacy organisations identified only around 14 individuals out of 740 paid, full-time employees (2%) that clearly focused on lobbying and 9 of these were based in the US. This spot-check only covered a specific group of organisations, so the total number of people working full-time in nonprofit roles that focus on political engagement for animals is probably larger than 14,<sup>61</sup> but we'd be surprised if the true total was much more than 100.

We haven't discussed think tanks much in this profile, partly because we're not aware of many think tanks that have both high relevance to farmed animal advocacy and high influence with political stakeholders. A [small number](#) of animal advocacy or animal-free food nonprofits do have some policy-focused research or writing, though the number of PPL-related roles at these organisations is small.<sup>62</sup>



## ARE THERE LESS COMPETITIVE OPTIONS?

80,000 Hours have [discussed](#) the entry requirements for various roles in politics and policy in the US. Suffice to say that many of the roles at the top level are highly competitive. For example, they have [estimated](#) that for graduates of top US law schools who try to become members of Congress, the chances of success are around 1 in 10 or lower. If you didn't go to a top university that has good links with political institutions, your chances are probably much lower.<sup>63</sup>

However, there are lots of roles with some relevance to PPL, including some less competitive options. For example, our first UK civil service interviewee believed that “the civil service is pretty easy to enter from almost any academic background.” Our second UK civil service interviewee believed that it is relatively easy to “jump in at lower levels” and recommended looking up the entry requirements for specific roles online.



For lobbying roles, the formal entry requirements might not always be high, though they sometimes are,<sup>64</sup> and meeting the entry requirements does not necessarily mean that your application would be competitive. Of our 7 interviewees in lobbying roles, 5 had direct experience in PPL roles prior to their current role.<sup>65</sup>

Roughly in order of our guess at their competitiveness, options include:

- ▶ Politician in national or international institutions,
- ▶ Local or state politician,
- ▶ Political appointee in the government,<sup>66</sup>
- ▶ Staffer or assistant for a politician,
- ▶ Researcher at a prestigious think tank or advisory body that occasionally focuses on relevant policy issues,
- ▶ Professional lobbyist,
- ▶ Researcher at a think tank focused on animal advocacy or animal-free food,
- ▶ Policy-focused civil servant,
- ▶ Part-time or voluntary adviser or consultant to a politician,
- ▶ Researcher at another academic or nonprofit organisation that occasionally focuses on relevant policy issues,
- ▶ Part-time local councillor,
- ▶ Other campaigns roles at an animal advocacy nonprofit,
- ▶ Administrative roles in national or international institutions,
- ▶ Administrative roles in local governmental or party politics,
- ▶ Volunteer political campaigner or canvasser,
- ▶ Member of a political youth or student group,
- ▶ Volunteer activist for an animal advocacy nonprofit with some involvement in PPL.

# WHAT OPTIONS WOULD YOU HAVE IF YOU WERE TO LEAVE THIS PATH?

THOUGH IT VARIES BY COUNTRY, IT IS RELATIVELY EASY TO TRANSFER BETWEEN ROLES WITHIN POLICY BUREAUCRACIES.<sup>67</sup> THERE ARE OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRANSFER WITHIN POLITICAL AND POLICY ROLES, [SUCH AS](#) FROM A ROLE AS A CONGRESSIONAL STAFFER TO JOINING THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OR BECOMING A MEMBER OF CONGRESS.<sup>68</sup>



More widely, PPL roles (and the preparation for them) seem likely to provide good [career capital](#) (skills, connections, and credentials) that can be applied to other career paths that could have high impact for animals.



# IS THE CAREER CAPITAL FROM POLITICS AND POLICY ROLES TRANSFERABLE TO LOBBYING ROLES?

After some quick research,<sup>69</sup> we identified quite a lot of [evidence](#) that people with experience in politics and policy roles will become better lobbyists than those without this experience. However, there are a few limitations of this evidence:

- ▶ Apart from [one paper](#) focused on South Korea, all this research focused on the US.
- ▶ This research focuses on Members of Congress and congressional staffers, which are competitive and challenging career paths.
- ▶ [One paper](#) found evidence that the improved lobbying abilities of members of Congress are specific to the issues where they have specialist subject-matter expertise, though this was not the case for Congressional staffers.
- ▶ There's not much strong evidence that gaining political experience and connections actually helps — it could just be that individuals who enter political and policy roles often have lots of relevant skills and expertise.

Several of our interviewees also believed that experience in politics and policy roles would be useful experience for those seeking to have lobbying roles. Some of these interviewees and some of the research that we identified suggested that the benefit of building connections through these roles is greater than the benefits to your knowledge or skillset.<sup>70</sup>





## IS THE CAREER CAPITAL TRANSFERABLE TO OTHER ROLES AT ANIMAL ADVOCACY NONPROFITS?

Beyond their application to lobbying roles, PPL career paths likely provide good, generally applicable career capital, such as various communication skills and people skills.<sup>71</sup> This perception seems to be shared by others we have spoken to.<sup>72</sup>

Additionally, PPL career paths seem to provide good opportunities for developing some of the same skills needed for [fundraising](#) and [management and leadership](#), which seem to be promising career paths in the animal advocacy movement. We would also guess that many of the skills that would be developed through politics and policy careers would be applicable to campaigning roles at animal advocacy nonprofits, which are far [more common](#) than lobbying roles.<sup>73</sup> All of these career paths seem well-suited to competent (and socially confident) generalists.

That said, some of the specialised knowledge, networks, and credentials that you gain through PPL roles or preparation might have little value for advocacy roles that are not focused on lobbying.



Richard Parr previously worked as a special adviser to the Prime Minister of the UK, as well as to the secretary of state in the Department for International Development. He now works as Managing Director for The Good Food Institute Europe, which lobbies for better funding and less restrictive labelling of plant-based and cultivated products.

## IS THE CAREER CAPITAL FROM LOBBYING OR OTHER ADVOCACY ROLES TRANSFERABLE TO POLITICS AND POLICY ROLES?

If you want to work in politics or policy roles, then it is unclear whether a past experience of animal advocacy would overall be helpful or a hindrance. It might help you to stand out from other candidates in some unusual circumstances, such as if you are applying to work directly with a politician who has a strong interest in animal issues.<sup>74</sup> There may be a lot of overlap in some of the required skillsets,<sup>75</sup> so you may be able to present your experiences as making you an excellent candidate for

available roles, or otherwise use the skills that you have developed to excel at the role.<sup>76</sup> We know of at least some animal advocates who have secured some form of political office, so public animal advocacy is clearly not wholly incompatible with political careers.<sup>77</sup>

However, animal advocacy experience could make people think that you are unable to fulfill your public role impartially. Several of our interviewees had this impression.<sup>78</sup> Notably, our interviewee at the USDA believed that there was an attitude “in certain circles” that farmed animal advocates are “politically toxic” and that having had animal advocacy experience could “actively hurt you in getting the job.” By comparison, Member of Parliament Kerry McCarthy [has found](#) that public knowledge of her veganism and personal views reduces her credibility on animal issues in politics.

On a practical note, some useful routes into politics and policy careers — including various internship options and the fast stream in the UK civil service — seem likely to be more readily available for recent graduates, so working in animal advocacy roles first might limit your options.

## IS THE CAREER CAPITAL FLEXIBLE ACROSS CAUSE AREAS?

Given that career capital in PPL roles seems to be fairly transferable, this also leaves open the option of switching between cause areas. If you are supportive of the [ideas of effective altruism](#) but are not highly confident that you want to focus your career on maximising your impact for animals, then politics and policy careers seem unusually promising.<sup>79</sup>

## INTERESTED IN POLITICS, POLICY, OR LOBBYING ROLES TO HELP ANIMALS?

IF YOU NEED TO DO SOME CAREER PLANNING, 80,000 HOURS’ [“TIPS ON MAKING CAREER PLANS”](#) WILL LIKELY BE HELPFUL.

If you’re considering whether you’d like to focus on developing PPL expertise or bringing your existing PPL expertise to support the animal advocacy movement, we might be able to help you talk through your options.

You can [apply for a one-to-one careers advice call](#) with us.

# HOW TO PREPARE FOR WORK IN THIS AREA

SO FAR, THIS PROFILE HAS FOCUSED ON INFORMATION TO HELP YOU DECIDE WHETHER SEEKING TO DEVELOP PPL EXPERTISE WOULD BE A HIGH-IMPACT USE OF YOUR TIME. THE INFORMATION BELOW IS MORE FOCUSED ON HELPING YOU DECIDE WHAT YOU COULD DO NEXT IF YOU DECIDE THAT YOU DO WANT TO FOCUS ON THIS.



## WHAT SORTS OF EXPERIENCE ARE MOST USEFUL FOR POLITICS, POLICY, AND LOBBYING EXPERTISE?

Our [interviewees](#) and various other sources we identified in our research frequently emphasised the importance of connections and networks in PPL, both for securing roles and for making progress on your goals once you've secured a role.<sup>80</sup> So seeking out experiences that can help you build your PPL network should be top priority.

Beyond this, for political roles, our interviewees emphasised that having had a wide range of experiences is helpful, especially within the broad area of PPL.<sup>81</sup> They also encouraged seeking experiences that develop relevant social skills.<sup>82</sup>

Our interviewees in non-political policy roles agreed that getting your foot in the door of the policy bureaucracy as soon as possible was usually much more helpful than building up skills externally.<sup>83</sup>

Our [interviewees](#) gave several recommendations about which sorts of experience could be helpful (though not necessary) in preparing for lobbying roles:

- ▶ Experience working for the body or institution you're planning to lobby, or experience that helps you build connections within those institutions.<sup>84</sup>
- ▶ Experience with law and public policy.<sup>85</sup>
- ▶ Experience in other kinds of advocacy work. This could include working full-time as an attorney, getting involved with grassroots campaigns of other organisations, or doing self-organised, unpaid lobbying.<sup>86</sup>
- ▶ Experience in other roles where you are asking people to change their behavior, such as in sales, marketing, or fundraising.<sup>87</sup>
- ▶ Some kind of experience with animal advocacy issues, perhaps built up through volunteering.<sup>88</sup>
- ▶ Some kind of experience that teaches you useful generalist skills, such as in the corporate sector.<sup>89</sup>
- ▶ Long-term familiarity with politics and political priorities, such as by reading the (political) news every day.<sup>90</sup>

80,000 Hours [argue](#) that “policy careers involve moving between different types of roles and institutions.” Experience in academia, think tanks, or various parts of the food and agriculture industry (especially the meat industry) could be relevant options as part of some PPL careers.

Another option is to seek experience in “public affairs agencies,” lobbying agencies and consultancies that are not cause-specific. This could enable you to build useful [career capital](#) (skills, connections, and credentials) without the downsides of animal advocacy lobbying experience, though you wouldn't be helping animals and might end up lobbying for interests that are harmful.



## WHAT SORT OF ACADEMIC TRAINING IS RELEVANT?

[Unlike some nonprofit roles](#), it seems important to get at least a relevant undergraduate degree if you're considering PPL careers. The expectations vary by role and location, but doing a master's in a relevant subject [may help](#) to speed up your PPL career progress too. Three of our interviewees believed that graduate degrees can help with connections though are not always necessary.<sup>91</sup> Five of our interviewees emphasised that they could be helpful or necessary for some roles, especially technical roles.<sup>92</sup> If you'd like to keep open the option of switching between academia or think tanks and policy roles, then it seems sensible to strongly consider doing a PhD. The importance of educational credentials may vary by country.<sup>93</sup>

When we asked our [interviewees](#) which sorts of academic experience were most helpful, some answers came up repeatedly, across various types of PPL role:

- ▶ [Agricultural economics](#) or general [economics](#),<sup>94</sup>
- ▶ Law,<sup>95</sup>
- ▶ Political science,<sup>96</sup>
- ▶ Public policy,<sup>97</sup>
- ▶ A specialist, technical subject of relevance, such as veterinary science, environmental science, agro-ecology, agricultural science, nutrition, or environmental studies.<sup>98</sup>

Though we're less confident that these are good options, other suggestions included:

- ▶ Engineering,<sup>99</sup>
- ▶ English, history, communications, or another degree that helps you to develop good writing and critical thinking skills,<sup>100</sup>
- ▶ MBAs,<sup>101</sup>
- ▶ Public health,<sup>102</sup>
- ▶ Educational qualifications,<sup>103</sup>
- ▶ Sociology or something else that helps you develop familiarity with multiple different social science disciplines,<sup>104</sup>
- ▶ Psychology.<sup>105</sup>

For lobbying, some interviewees noted without prompting that a range of different degree types could provide relevant training and that specific degrees were not necessary.<sup>106</sup>

# USEFUL RESOURCES

Resources that were created in the making of this profile:

- ▶ The [interview findings spreadsheet](#),
- ▶ The results of our brief research on [lobbying and the “revolving door”](#),
- ▶ An initial list of policy-focused [animal advocacy think tanks](#).
  
- ▶ For further information about specific countries and institutions, you will need to identify resources yourself with more specific information. Here are some starting points:
- ▶ For the UK civil service, see our [interviews](#) from two individuals in the UK civil service, the [resources by](#) former UK civil servant Sam Hilton, [80,000 Hours’ profile](#), and [these two](#) websites.
- ▶ For UK politics and lobbying, see [80,000 Hours’ profile](#) and find jobs and internships at [this site](#).
- ▶ For the USDA, see our [interview](#) with an employee.
- ▶ For US political actors and opportunities, see the relevant content by 80,000 Hours ([here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)), our [interviews](#) with someone who works for a US local politician, plus Courtney Fern, Chris Holbein, and Mark Onley)
- ▶ For European institutions, see our [interview](#) with Alexandra Clark.
- ▶ For UN institutions, see our [interview](#) with Raphaël Podselver.
- ▶ For Chinese PPL, see [these two](#) reports and our [interviews](#) (from another skills profile) with Jeff Zhou and Jian Yi.
- ▶ For Indian PPL, see [this report](#) and our [interview](#) with Amey Deshmukh.
- ▶ For Brazilian PPL, see [this report](#). We also had interviews with several people (Catalina Bustamante [here](#) and various others [here](#)) from other parts of Latin America that touched on PPL.
- ▶ For German PPL, see [this report](#).

Note that we asked interviewees about the “key players and institutions” in their country.

For those focused on policy and politics, rather than working for nonprofits, it may be helpful to engage with the wider community focused on helping animals effectively, to reduce the risk that your [values drift](#) and to think about how you can help animals the most:

- ▶ Perhaps connect with someone who can be your “[accountability buddy](#)” to keep you focused on your goals. There are other suggestions in this post on “[Concrete Ways to Reduce Risks of Value Drift and Lifestyle Drift](#).”
- ▶ You could participate in various [conferences and events](#), including those organised by existing local [effective altruism groups](#) and animal advocacy

groups, though you might want to avoid publicity about this in case it damages your credibility with your colleagues.

- ▶ Join the [effective animal advocacy community directory](#) (add your details [here](#)) — you can keep your name anonymous and use [anonymous email forwarding](#) if preferred.
- ▶ Follow discussions in the public [Effective Animal Advocacy - Discussion](#) Facebook group.

Other useful resources:

- ▶ A review of “[Informational Lobbying: Theory and Effectiveness](#)” by Matt Lerner (2020)
- ▶ We haven’t read them ourselves, but there seem to be various [books](#), [blogs](#), and [reports](#) related to effective lobbying. There are also large amounts of resources on what makes good politicians and policy-making.
- ▶ 80,000 Hours’ advice on “[how to get a job](#).”

# NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Frank R. Baumgartner et al.'s [book](#) on US lobbying notes that, “for the most part, when a government official was mentioned in our interviews as being involved in an issue, that official clearly had a preferred side in the debate and was actively working to further that side. Although much of the literature seems to promote a view on lobbying that presents governmental actors in relatively neutral positions as the targets, but not the sources, of lobbying, we found few such individuals, especially not in the ranks of committee chairs or other leaders. Much more common than these neutral decision makers were government officials who themselves were policy advocates working hand-in-hand with other members of the same side, urging a particular policy outcome, and actively lobbying others. In fact, about 40 percent of the advocates in our study were government officials themselves, not outside lobbyists... It turns out that many advocates are already inside the government, not on the outside looking in.”

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the section “Lobbying and effective mobilization of legislators may be crucial for ensuring that favorable legislation is passed without major delays” in Sentience Institute’s case study of the [US anti-death penalty movement](#).

<sup>3</sup> They [add](#) that, for a student similar to an Oxford PPE graduate, this suggests the path is competitive with the most high potential earning to give careers – such as those in finance – in terms of financial influence, which when combined with politicians’ law-making powers and advocacy opportunities could put politics clearly ahead.”

<sup>4</sup> There may be some more public opportunities. For example, Kerry McCarthy, a UK politician, gave a speech on World Vegan Day in 2011. However, it’s unclear how positive this particular speech was, since McCarthy [notes](#) that she was “heckled by farming members of parliament (of which there are many).”

<sup>5</sup> See the answer by our interviewee who works as an advisor for a US local politician to the question “What does a typical day involve?” UK MP Kerry McCarthy also [noted](#) that “there are some really good journalists now interested in food and farming policy as it affects animals... I often provide journalists with quotes and details of parliamentary questions I’ve asked.” Additionally, we asked a connection who had worked with two UK MPs whether political support roles have much opportunity for impact and they suggested that there were opportunities through “making a stink and making a lot of noise” to gain media attention; with good stats and the right quotes you can get movement.

<sup>6</sup> For example, in the US, there are various state-level organizations with “Humane Voters” in their title, such as the [Humane Voters of Washington](#). We’re not sure how many of these roles are full-time and salaried currently. At least, the founder of [Voters for Animal Rights](#) in New York [seems to work on VFAR full-time](#). But opportunities might arise in the future. Working on a campaign could help you to get a position within the politician’s staff if they win the election; otherwise, it might still provide useful [career capital](#).



<sup>7</sup> Our first anonymous UK civil service interviewee noted that, “[i]n terms of what tariffs can do, you could choose to reduce the tariff on a certain item.” “If you thought a country was particularly bad on animal welfare for say, beef,” you could be “less generous” on the tariffs for that particular product type. “You could, off your own back, choose” to offer harsher tariffs — “not necessarily justify that to everyone else in terms of welfare,” but essentially find some other reason to justify that. Our first anonymous UK civil service interviewee also noted that civil servants “can’t just write up a cool idea to a minister and ask if they can do it.” But, “say you’re working on cage sizes, civil servants, because they’re the expert, can add an extra inch on. And no one would be able to challenge the civil servant because they’re the expert.” “Every so often you get the opportunity where you’re the expert and your expertise” can “tilt it.”

Similarly, 80,000 Hours [believes](#) that “there are many situations in which civil servants can influence government policy:

- On issues that the minister cares enough about for changes to be made, but not enough to micromanage the changes.
- Where the minister has a vague goal, but no specific idea of what they want.
- Where the details have a large impact. For example, the details of one piece of legislation can affect many other laws.”

<sup>8</sup> These employees were connected with each other and may have come up with the estimate together.

<sup>9</sup> See the “Unplanned follow-up questions” for our second anonymous UK civil service interviewee. They also noted that DEFRA more broadly contains thousands of staff, it’s just that the number of animal welfare-focused staff is smaller.

<sup>10</sup> Our first anonymous UK civil service interviewee discussed this point explicitly in the section “Any other thoughts?”

<sup>11</sup> See their answer to the question: “In [your country] who are the key players...” This is corroborated [here](#).

<sup>12</sup> Consider, for example, the example in the section “Lobbying and effective mobilization of legislators may be crucial for ensuring that favorable legislation is passed without major delays” in Sentience Institute’s case study of the [US anti-death penalty movement](#). Anti-death penalty legislation passed through each chamber of the New Jersey legislature by a single vote. This particular piece of legislation had seen substantial lobbying efforts on both those supportive of and opposed to the death penalty; had the lobbying efforts of the either side been different (such as lower effort by the anti-death penalty advocates, or more effective tactics used by the pro-death penalty advocates), the outcome could have been different.

<sup>13</sup> Charity Entrepreneurship’s [report](#) on “Political Change” interventions for animals focuses on some specific opportunities that they were optimistic might be cost-effective; campaigns to modify dissolved oxygen levels for farmed fish in Taiwan or Japan and campaigns to improve feed fortification for hens in Taiwan or India. Their conclusions vary across these specific proposals, but their most optimistic conclusion was that “a well-executed government campaign in Taiwan is expected to be moderately less, or equally as cost-effective as launching a new corporate outreach campaign concerning a priority ask in a priority country.”

Beyond a brief comment on “Ballot initiatives and lobbying” in a [report](#) by Rethink Priorities, this is the only explicit cost-effectiveness evaluation of lobbying efforts by animal advocacy nonprofits that we are aware of. It’s worth noting that the range of possible lobbying interventions is much wider than those evaluated by Charity Entrepreneurship (see the section “Influencing legislation” [here](#)) and that advocates focused on long-term impact might be less optimistic about interventions focused on small welfare improvements, relative to some types of lobbying. Interventions that contribute more directly to the end of animal agriculture might be more cost-effective on longer timeframes; your views on this might depend substantially on the extent to which you expect that incremental welfare reforms will lead to [momentum or complacency for further change](#).

<sup>14</sup> This is a fairly common problem for social scientific analyses, which may be able to note how frequently policy or social change occurs, but struggle to isolate the effects of actions by social movements, let alone lobbying efforts as distinct from other interventions used by those movements. See [here](#) for some examples.

The study also found that only 4% saw some kind of change in the way that the issue was framed — this might provide a clearer indication of the extent to which advocates were able to directly influence the issues.

<sup>15</sup> The animal agriculture industry seems to spend [less](#) than some other industries. In some [specific areas](#), industry lobbying is not very high, but could probably be increased if the industry felt threatened.

<sup>16</sup> See the paragraph beginning “A study in 1979...” [here](#) and more recent evidence on the “[backfire effect](#).”

<sup>17</sup> Our interviewee from the USDA said: “I think a lot of organisations waste a lot of time and resources on not very useful stuff; there are a lot of lawsuits against the USDA that animal welfare orgs put together that I don’t think do anything. They lose them, and they’re just kind of a waste of time for them. Honestly, I think that they, if anything, not uncommonly, make it so that (I don’t want to overstate this, but) I do think I’ve seen times where this has actively done damage to their cause, either just by not working with people they could be working with or by seeming like they’re not really serious about the cause, they’re only really interested in... obviously PETA’s the worst offender. I understand they’re trying to set precedents and stuff, but they have lawsuits focused on a single animal and I think it makes them come off as not serious. So I would say — my ultra-biased opinion — is that, with some few exceptions such as GFI, most lobbying organisations are harder to have an impact.”

<sup>18</sup> Consider, for example, [this quote](#) from Stefan Eck, a Member of the EU Parliament: “MEPs received about 30,000 emails in the week leading up to the vote, asking them to support my initiative to ban battery cages for rabbits. There has never been an online campaign of that scale at the EU Parliament before. It was the exceptional efforts of Animal Equality that contributed to the passage of my initiative with an overwhelming majority.” A legislator (in this case Eck) was needed to introduce the proposal and advocate for it on the inside, but external pressure and mobilization from advocacy organisations also helped to ensure that the initiative was passed, at least in Eck’s evaluation.

Relatedly, Hermes noted that he felt “very responsible” for Belgium’s slaughter without stunning law, “but if you ask about ten other people, they will consider themselves the most important people in that process.” E.g. the chairman of GAIA [a nonprofit that Hermes describes as “the most important animal welfare NGO in Belgium”] made a “crucial contribution.” The minister of agriculture arguably “made the crucial step.” There were also “more invisible parts in the process” — “public servants... writing passages in the regulations... can make the real difference for the animals.”

This does not mean that additional contributions to all of these different interventions will be equally cost-effective (for some relevant discussion, see the strategic considerations in Sentience Institute’s [summary](#) of the evidence for whether the movement should target advocacy efforts towards influencers or the general population and Animal Charity Evaluators’ research into the effects of [protests](#) on “policy and law”). However, we don’t think that the evidence is strong enough at this time to justify entirely deprioritising any of these strategies. We think that the movement as a whole should invest slightly more than it currently does in each of public campaigning focused on legislators, insider lobbying, and gaining close supporters among politicians and bureaucrats.

<sup>19</sup> Research in political science and sociology has shown that public opinion affects how easy it is for social movement actors like animal advocacy nonprofits to drive social change (see, for example, the empirical studies summarised in the section “External constraints on the impact of social movements” in [this post](#) by Sentience Institute) and affects the policies that legislatures adopt (see, for example, [these two](#) reviews).

However, the history of the US anti-abortion movement [suggests](#) that “for securing desired legislative outcomes at both the state and national levels, securing the support of politicians seems more important than favorable public opinion.” Similarly, the [history of the US anti-death penalty movement](#) suggests that “legislative change is surprisingly tractable without public support, though public opinion has a significant effect.”

When it comes to shifting public opinion, we’re more optimistic about the use of [documentaries](#), [factory farming investigation footage](#), and targeted outreach to [influencers](#) than we are about the indirect effects on public opinion of [individual outreach focused on diet change](#).

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- Our interviewee who works for a US local politician argued that talented individuals can “sway legislation” by being the “point person” for decision-makers, whether you’re doing that from the “inside” or the “outside.”
- Alexandra Clarke, who had worked both for the European Parliament and in a lobbying role for Humane Society International, noted that politicians seeking to encourage political change still have to do similar work to external advocates, such as forming coalitions with colleagues, it’s just that politicians may have more credibility with other policy-makers.
- Mark Onley at the Good Food Institute believed that “what makes more of an impact is what you’re advocating for, rather than one career versus the other” within PPL.
- Hermes Sanctorum, a policy consultant and former MP in the Flemish Parliament, noted that the various routes within PPL are “just different. To say there’s one of those three that has the biggest impact, I think it’s very hard to weigh.” In each case, most of the work will have no impact but there will be occasional large opportunities and successes.
- Additionally, Frank Baumgartner, a political scientist who has studied lobbying extensively, [believes](#) that “as you’re in the policy swirl... you’ll be a part of a professional community of people who’s promoting ideas and understandings of issues. The key is to be smart enough and able enough to step back... and try to see if there’s ways to promote increased attention to under-attended aspects of complicated policies.” See also footnote ?.

<sup>21</sup> See the answers to the question beginning “Do you have any broad thoughts...” by our interviewee who works as an advisor for a US local politician, our first anonymous UK civil service interviewee, Raphaël, and Hermes.

Additionally, Frank R. Baumgartner et al.’s [book](#) on US lobbying notes that “policy makers and organized interests frequently work in tandem to advocate policy goals that they both share. Each can do things that the other cannot; officials within government can set agendas, meet with colleagues, and so on. Organized interests outside of government often have more staff time available, the ability to do research and publicize findings, and the luxury of working on just one or a few issues at a time... As a result, most lobbying consists of working with allied government officials rather than only trying to convince them to support some policy option. Virtually all of the applications of the other sorts of resources are made in an effort to increase an organization’s supply of these allies.”

<sup>22</sup> See the answers by our first anonymous UK civil service interviewee, Hermes, and Chris. A connection who had worked with two UK MPs noted that their impression of the civil service was that “you’re a cog” and don’t have much scope to influence or “change stuff,” whereas in an MP’s office “you have first right of response” and an opportunity to directly influence decisions. Additionally, our interviewees seemed to have the impression that there could be substantially different opportunities for involvement in policy-making between different roles and departments within the civil service or executive branch and seemed to believe that this could affect your opportunities for positive impact (see footnote ?).

Intuitively, this could affect both the opportunities for direct impact — shaping legislation, regulations, or their implementation — and indirect impact, such as influencing the social norms and attitudes within the relevant, influential sections of the machinery of government. This seems consistent with [Frank Baumgartner’s remark](#) that what counts is that you are involved with and shaping the “policy swirl.”

<sup>23</sup> This point was also discussed by our anonymous interviewee in the UK civil service (in response to the question “Can you summarise your role for me?”) and has been emphasised by former UK civil servant Sam Hilton (see [here](#) and [here](#)). This could also apply to work for politicians; it may make more sense to seek to work with politicians who have demonstrated at least some interest in animal issues, or other issues that may make them favourable to promoting plant-based initiatives, such as the environment, nutrition, or food justice.

<sup>24</sup> The report also notes that:

- “Compared to France or the UK, political culture in Germany is characterized by legalism, consensus, and a lot of internal coordination (e.g., between departments and with trade associations or states).”
- “Usually, civil service is a lifetime career in Germany. There is little switching into and out of ministries compared to other countries (e.g., ‘pantouflage’ in France or ‘revolving door’ in the USA).”
- Top civil service positions are influenced by party-political affiliations, which is the case for [special advisers](#) in the UK but not for most civil servants.

<sup>25</sup> This issue is explored, for example, [here](#).

<sup>26</sup> In China, there may be some opportunities to work collaboratively with the government. This was discussed a little by Jian Yi (see the [interview findings spreadsheet](#) for the skills profile on “Growing the animal advocacy community in countries where it is small or new skills profile”) and [Pei Su on the Sentience Institute podcast](#). Several academic articles have also discussed this topic (examples [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), and [5](#)).

<sup>27</sup> For example, there seem to be [some individuals](#) within Chinese governmental institutions who support animal welfare and the development of an industry producing alternative foods to animal products; these individuals may be able to help large numbers of animals.

<sup>28</sup> As another example, the opportunities for impact for politicians whose party is not in government varies by country. In Parliamentary systems (like most of Europe), their impact mostly comes from holding the government to account and seeking to force issues onto the political agenda, whereas in the US Congressional system, the opposition party still plays a relatively important role in creating legislation. This was discussed in an [episode of the Sentience Institute podcast](#) with Frank Baumgartner, a political scientist who has studied policy dynamics extensively (listen from 1:14:16).

<sup>29</sup> These are:

- [Summary of government and policy career opportunities](#)
- [US artificial intelligence policy work](#)
- [US congressional staffers](#)
- [The UK civil service](#)
- [Party politics in the UK](#)
- [Think tank research](#).



<sup>30</sup> Contrasting her current role at the Nonhuman Rights Project to her former role at the Humane Society of the United States, Courtney Fern noted that “it’s very different when you’re a lobbyist for a large organisation vs. a smaller organisation.” At the NhRP, Courtney is in charge of “almost all aspects of our lobbying.” At HSUS, other staff would do the required research and “draft the ordinance or the bill” — Courtney was just focused on “direct contact with the lawmaker.” Mark Onley’s experience seemed to be between these extremes; he noted that project management of internal projects and actions was an important part of lobbying roles at the Good Food Institute. Camilla Olesen’s role seemed to focus more on coordinating and supporting campaigns staff to Anima when they worked on political issues.

<sup>31</sup> For some discussion of think tanks, see the answers by Catalina and our first anonymous UK civil service interviewee, as well as 80,000 Hours’ [report](#).

<sup>32</sup> We also looked at the answers to similar questions by [Frank Baumgartner](#), a political scientist who has studied lobbying extensively, [Tom Kalil](#), a political appointee to the US White House, and a [report on careers in politics and policy in Germany](#).

The table only includes characteristics mentioned by multiple sources. Other characteristics only mentioned by one source included:

- The importance of being able to bring up new arguments that may go against “the dominant way of talking about the issue” (Frank Baumgartner, following his empirical research on issue “framing”),
- Thinking creatively and strategically about how to solve the problems they face (our interviewee who works as an advisor for a US local politician),
- Competence (our interviewee who works as an advisor for a US local politician),
- Being able to concisely and clearly explain and use technical scientific information (Mark, in answer to the question beginning “Within this area...”),
- Can think quickly and deal with unanticipated questions (Mark),
- Have good research skills (Courtney),
- Have good attention to detail (Chris),
- Dress and act professionally and credibly (Alexandra).

<sup>33</sup> This was mentioned by our interviewee at the USDA, our interviewee who works as an advisor for a US local politician, and our first anonymous UK civil service interviewee. See also the resources by former UK civil servant Sam Hilton ([here](#) and [here](#)).

Additionally, our interviewee at the USDA noted that there was a lot of leeway in their work and that, in addition to the main projects that staff are tasked with, there was time for “whatever you can convince your supervisor to do.” In this sense, social skills and persuasion skills may enable you to work on high-impact projects if you take “insider” roles.

<sup>34</sup> See the answers by Alexandra (to the question beginning “Focusing on the US...”), Mark (to the question beginning “Within this area, what...”), our first anonymous UK civil service interviewee (in answer to the question beginning “What makes great...”). Additionally, Hermes emphasised the benefits of technical PhDs for understanding issues relating to cultivated meat. At various points, Tom Kalil, who worked in the White House for many years, [noted](#) that there were some more technical routes in political and policy roles.

<sup>35</sup> For example:

- Our interviewee at the USDA noted that in a lot of jobs, “you put your interests on the table, saying ‘I’m really interested in animal welfare and this is what’s motivating me’... But that attitude is really not appreciated” in the USDA. “Some people would find it very frustrating to be in that environment.”
- Our interviewee who worked with a US local politician noted that sometimes you have to be pragmatic and “see the bigger picture,” taking part in actions or decisions that cause animal suffering and could be deeply upsetting to some people.
- Mark noted that if you’re “working with people that have significantly less mission alignment for you,” that can “be really difficult for some people.”
- Raphaël noted that “if you’re living in a 100% vegan bubble it’s going to be difficult for you to get into this field.” Lots of people that “are great people, nice people, but do not always agree with you.” He emphasised the importance of flexibility and pragmatism.
- Our second anonymous UK civil service interviewee noted that “you have to find ways to temper your radical idealism.” You can “find ways to push where the evidence leads,” but if it doesn’t lead there, then you can’t act on your ideals much. There’s also an expectation that when you take the job, you act neutrally. For example, if you were an environmental activist working in DEFRA, it might be “your job” to help the government start fracking somewhere.
- Camilla noted that “it’s hard to be in contact with the real world all the time... having to cope with the arguments that you don’t like and politicians that have their own agendas and lies, can be very harsh.”

<sup>36</sup> See the answers by Raphaël, Hermes (in answer to the question beginning “Do you have any broad...”), Chris (in response to the question beginning “What makes great...”), and our second anonymous UK civil service interviewee (in response to the question beginning “What makes great...”). A [report on careers in politics and policy in Germany](#) noted that civil servants “need patience, perseverance, resilience, and high intrinsic motivation.”

<sup>37</sup> See the answers by our first anonymous UK civil service interviewee (in response to the questions beginning “How can someone assess their personal fit...” and “Focusing on the US”), Hermes (in response to the question beginning “What sorts of experience...”), and our second anonymous UK civil service interviewee (in response to the question beginning “What makes great...”). This was also noted by 80,000 Hours’ [profile](#) on AI policy careers.

<sup>38</sup> [80,000 Hours’ calculation](#) for UK political careers comes to promising conclusions about the opportunities for individual politicians to move substantial amounts of money, despite accounting for the fact that only a small proportion of those entering political careers will actually become politicians at the national level. So if you have a high risk tolerance and a good chance of success, it may well be your best bet.

<sup>39</sup> This was emphasised by:

- Our first anonymous UK civil service interviewee
- Several conversations we’ve had with personal friends in the UK civil service
- [80,000 Hours’ profile on the UK civil service](#)
- Our interviewee in the USDA.

<sup>40</sup> For example:

- Our interviewee who works for a US local politician noted that they work 9-5 for their regular job but also volunteers for the politician's political campaign and is working with them on "writing a book about the evolution of plant-based food," both of which sometimes take place outside usual working hours.
- 80,000 Hours have [written](#) about congressional staffers: "Although some staffers work 40 hour weeks, many others often work 12 hour days. It's a stressful job with lots of tight deadlines, interruptions, and multitasking. Conditions will vary depending on which legislator you are working for, as they run their offices in different ways."
- 80,000 Hours have [written](#) on UK politicians: "Those who succeed also seem... able to work very long hours."
- 80,000 Hours have [written](#) on AI policy careers: More senior roles often have very long hours, and people who want to advance quickly often work up to 80 hours per week.
- Tom Kalil [noted](#) in a podcast with 80,000 Hours that "you can't ask the President of the United States for an extension," so you have to have an attitude of "stay up until it's done" and have "the ability to produce a lot of work in a short period of time, because you might be in this situation where something has to be done by the end of the day."

<sup>41</sup> This was Chris' suggestion.

<sup>42</sup> Gabrielė Vaitkevičiūtė, executive director of Tušti Narvai [told us](#) that she "always regretted that [she] didn't join clubs at universities." In Lithuania you can join the youth branches of the political parties. She thinks they give you lots of opportunities to develop as a leader in those groups. These groups are "aiming to develop leaders... It seems like their goal is to identify people who can become future politicians." Similarly, a [report on careers in politics and policy in Germany](#) notes that "Membership as well as regional leadership positions in the party's youth organization are useful. This seems to apply in particular to the Junge Union (CDU). Some chairman positions of youth organizations even come with ex-officio-memberships of the executive board of the respective party, which accelerate your career. Regional or national leadership positions can also provide visibility and make it easier to secure a spot on the ballot." It also notes that "you should be active in party politics during your time at university. The networks you build during this time will be helpful for any career in federal politics. It will be difficult for you to make up for this later, as you tend to have more time while at university than after you graduate. It can also be a cheap test for your personal fit."

<sup>43</sup> This was suggested by Courtney.

<sup>44</sup> This was Chris' suggestion.

<sup>45</sup> This was suggested by Mark.

<sup>46</sup> This was suggested by Courtney.

<sup>47</sup> This was suggested by our interviewee who works as an advisor for a US local politician.

<sup>48</sup> This was suggested by Chris. It was also [discussed by Tom Kalil](#), who worked in the White House for many years; being involved in the (failed) 1988 Presidential campaign by Michael Dukakis helped to secure him high-leverage employment in the US government. Kalil sees this sort of experience as very helpful for teaching you how to be a "generalist" in policy, although Kalil and the podcast host discuss this as being a fairly risky way to try to enter politics.

<sup>49</sup> This was suggested by our first anonymous UK civil service interviewee, though they noted that "the civil service doesn't focus on this sort of task much in practice." This could be quite a time-intensive exercise, though there could be other ways to make use of the report you had written, such as by sharing it with organisations working on related issues.

<sup>50</sup> This was suggested by several interviewees. For example, the UK civil service offers the “fast stream” and several internships. There are also internships at various lobbying roles for animal advocacy nonprofits, such as at HSUS and HSLF. See the relevant sections of 80,000 Hours’ profiles on [US Congressional staffers](#), the [UK Civil service](#), and [UK party politics](#) for more specific suggestions. A [report on careers in politics and policy in Germany](#) recommends applying for scholarships from party-affiliated foundations and for “relevant internships (especially ministries, MdB, party headquarters, think tanks; possibly also: political journalism, public affairs, public policy consultancies).”

<sup>51</sup> See the survey’s full results [here](#), the original form [here](#), and our write-up [here](#).

Additionally, 2 respondents selected “Government and policy experts” for the question “What kind of talent does your organisation need most as a skill for the next 5 years? (pick up to 6).” By comparison, 7 respondents selected “management” and 5 selected “fundraising experience.” When the same question was asked about what skills the “animal movement” needed (as opposed to the respondent’s organisation), the same 2 respondents and a further 2 selected “Government and policy experts.”

<sup>52</sup> The nearest competitors had 3 selections each. Additionally, 16 respondents selected “Government and policy experts” for the question “What kind of talent does the animal movement need most as a skill for the next 5 years? (pick up to 6).” The nearest competitor was “Scientists in cell biology, tissue engineering etc” with 12 selections.

We do not intend to publish the full results to this survey, since the qualitative questions provide information that may compromise the anonymity of the respondents.

<sup>53</sup> In the previous year’s [survey](#), “management” was joint-second. These surveys had similarly low numbers of respondents focusing on animal issues specifically.

<sup>54</sup> When they analysed the allocation of resources by the 20 charities that ACE comprehensively reviewed between 2015 and 2017, the share was larger (19%).

<sup>55</sup> This question asked respondents to type their own responses, whereas the previous questions had been multiple choice.

<sup>56</sup> This evidence is weak and ambiguous. Firstly, the participants to the survey itself do not represent any particularly specific group of animal advocates. Secondly, in response to the question “Which department do you work in?” none mentioned anything relating to politics, policy, or lobbying, even though some such roles do exist in the movement, so it is fairly unsurprising that none of the participants mentioned this sort of expertise as being crucial for their role.

<sup>57</sup> The previous year’s [survey](#) asked about fewer skill types. In that year, “Government and policy experts” was rated as the least needed for “my org.”

<sup>58</sup> There is a clear contrast between the high ratings in our short surveys for the importance of “government” as a talent gap in the movement and the low number of roles that currently appear to focus on PPL. This may suggest that the community is already interested in expanding the number of paid roles in nonprofits that focus on this area.

Additionally, there is [widespread agreement](#) among effective animal advocacy researchers that, on the margin, tactics focused on institutions should be prioritised over tactics focused on individuals. A large proportion of the effective animal advocacy community’s institutional tactics have focused on corporate welfare campaigns, but most of the [arguments in favour of prioritising institutional tactics](#) apply just as much to legislative interventions as to corporate campaigns. Given the available evidence, it seems strategically prudent for the movement to invest a greater proportion of its resources into legislative interventions.



<sup>59</sup> Despite knowing hundreds of people who identify closely with both the animal advocacy and effective altruism movements, we know of fewer than ten who work full-time in politics or in public policy roles. Of course, this evidence is highly anecdotal and could be explained by a number of factors other than an absence of such people.

We also posted on a Facebook group specifically for engaged members of the effective animal advocacy community, asking: “Does anyone know people who are working in government and policy roles and have a strong interest in (farmed) animal advocacy, or who have a lot of experience with this area? Participants can be from any country, but I’m especially keen to get recommendations for contacts who work directly in politics or public institutions, rather than people in lobbying roles at nonprofits.” Despite 73 people seeing this post, only one person reached out to us with a recommendation.

<sup>60</sup> Consider some of the following numbers, from the US:

- 50 states and 5 territories, each with its own [governor](#).
- 535 [members of Congress](#)
- 7,383 [state legislators](#)
- Nearly 25,000 [Congressional staffers](#)
- Nearly 20,000 [municipal governments](#), though they don’t all have their own mayor.
- Nearly 100,000 [USDA employees](#), though far fewer in roles that might have meaningful influence over policies that affect animals,
- “Food policy directors” in 30-50 cities across the US, though this role tends to focus on food access, rather than meat reduction; specific roles in local politics focused explicitly on meat reductions are rare. Of course, there will be a [very large number](#) of roles within the wider government bureaucracy.

<sup>61</sup> See footnote ?. See also our spreadsheet on “[Animal advocacy think tanks](#).”

<sup>62</sup> Examples include , such as the [Centre for Animals & Social Justice](#) (UK), [The Greenfield Project](#) (US), and the [Good Food Institute](#) (US). There may be work opportunities in influential think tanks that occasionally publish reports relevant to the farmed animal movement (such as the UK’s [Chatham House](#) or Australia’s [Productivity Commission](#)) or organisations that focus at least in part on [food policy](#), but you could work there for several years without having any input on relevant reports or end up contributing to reports that are harmful for animals.

<sup>63</sup> Similarly, 80,000 Hours conducted an [analysis](#) of the expected impact of entering political careers in the UK. For “an Oxford PPE graduate who aims to become a politician in the UK,” they estimated that they could expect to influence “£7.5 – 75 million,” but that “For students without the typical attributes of Oxford PPE students, chances are significantly reduced. For instance, repeating the calculation but considering students from Oxford and Cambridge as a whole suggests expected influence on the order of £1 – 10 million.”

<sup>64</sup> Courtney Fern of the Nonhuman Rights Project emphasised that you could easily gain sufficient knowledge and expertise in animal advocacy to secure a lobbying role from personal research or volunteering roles. She also suggested that “people can obtain the experience necessary to get into a high level position in lobbying and advocacy by doing an entry-level position.”

Among the 4 lobbying roles identified in our [spot-check](#) of advertised roles at nonprofits, the average number of years of relevant experience that were required was 4.25, though the very small sample size means that this might not be typical.

<sup>65</sup> None of these experiences were very similar; one was in a lobbying role at another animal advocacy nonprofit, one was in a lobbying role at an unrelated nonprofit, one was in a policy administration role, one was in a political role, and one was focused on empowering young people in Africa in the political system.

<sup>66</sup> [Tom Kalil](#) is an example from the US. The UK has “[special advisers](#).” Individuals in these positions seem to interact substantially with both the civil service or executive branch and with the politicians, and have leverage over policy making and policy implementation.

<sup>67</sup> Our USDA interviewee believed that “time in the USDA” was also helpful for advancing in the USDA. Both of our interviewees in the UK civil service also believed that experience within the civil service, even if irrelevant to animal welfare, was much more useful for career advancement than corporate experience. In the UK, it is relatively easy to transfer between roles at different departments, so getting your foot in the door, securing a role in the civil service, may be more important than developing specialised skills, especially since the civil service sometimes moves individuals between departments and uses bulk recruitment, rather than recruiting for particular roles. (See the answer from our first anonymous UK civil service interviewee (to the question beginning “Focusing on the US”) and our second anonymous UK civil service interviewee (to the questions about “Can you summarise your role for me?” and “What sorts of experience...”).) A [report on careers in politics and policy in Germany](#) advises work in different departments, especially in the *Stabsabteilungen* (departments associated with ministerial leadership) and notes that “entering the civil service earlier appears to be preferable in terms of career prospects.”

<sup>68</sup> This is discussed in some of 80,000 Hours’ advice on careers in politics and policy, such as [here](#). Our interviewees mostly shared this impression:

- Our USDA interviewees believed (though was unsure) that there are leadership roles working for Congress (i.e. the legislative branch) that hire from the USDA (i.e. the executive branch — “policy administrators”).
- Mark expected that the skills and connections built up during political roles focusing on a particular topic could be transferred to a regulatory or bureaucracy role on the same topic.
- Our first anonymous UK civil service interviewee didn’t think that the career capital you gain in the civil service was very transferable to other contexts, but suspected that career capital was more interchangeable between political roles and think tank roles.
- Chris commented that PPL routes share common skills and requirements, such as the ability to “convince people to act on values they already hold,” so expertise in these skills can likely be transferred between paths.

<sup>69</sup> The search term used was ““revolving door” lobbying”. The first two pages of Google Scholar results were searched. Results were only excluded if they did not appear to have substantial relevant empirical findings. I.e. no results were excluded because their findings were contrary to our intuition that those with experience in politics and policy roles will become better lobbyists. In fact, no evidence was identified whatsoever that was contrary to this hypothesis, except for the slightly mixed findings of Makse (2017). However, we only read the abstracts of these studies and sometimes skimmed the papers; we did not dive into thorough considerations of their methodologies. Hence, we do not have high confidence in the accuracy of the claims.

<sup>70</sup> For the research, see [I Vidal et al. \(2012\)](#) and [McCrain \(2018\)](#), summarised in the [spreadsheet](#).

As for our interviewees, see the answers by our USDA interviewee, Alexandra, Mark (in answer to the question beginning “Do you have any broad thoughts...”), Raphaël (in answer to the question about the importance of PPL expertise relative to animal advocacy / animal-free food familiarity), and Hermes (in answer to the question “What does a typical day involve?” and the question beginning “How transferable...”). Additionally, a connection who had worked with two UK MPs told us that there was a “clear difference” between lobbyists or organisations that are good at political briefings (who “understand the processes and steps” of the institutions that they are lobbying) and those are not. The [report on careers in politics and policy in Germany](#) also noted that people leaving political careers “will still have an excellent political network. Securing influential positions afterward should not be very difficult, particularly within interest groups.”

<sup>71</sup> For a fuller list, see the skills described in the section above on “Will you have good personal fit with politics, policy, and lobbying roles.” Our [spot-check](#) of 27 animal advocacy nonprofits found evidence that communications skills are important to many jobs in animal advocacy.

<sup>72</sup> For example, an individual who had worked for 2 different UK Members of Parliament suggested to us that working with politicians can help you to build experience of working effectively under time-pressure and dealing with multiple stakeholders with competing interests and requirements. Camilla noted that you gain strategy, communications, networking, and generalist people skills (see the question beginning “How transferable...”).

80,000 Hours note in their [profile](#) on the UK civil service that “the civil service emphasises building a well-rounded skill set. They prefer you to shore up your weaknesses to become a good generalist, rather than focus one or two narrow skills. The main skills you build are writing... Rapid learning and synthesising information... Working with lots of people and organisations... Management.”

<sup>73</sup> We also suspect that some of these campaigning roles incorporate at least some focus on lobbying, so experience and knowledge from politics and policy roles could be directly relevant. If animal advocacy nonprofits do slightly increase their focus on legislative interventions, as we suggest that they might in the section above on “How much does the movement need more expertise in this area?” then campaigning roles may come to focus increasingly on lobbying efforts.

<sup>74</sup> This suggestion was made to us by an individual who had worked for 2 different UK Members of Parliament.

<sup>75</sup> This was pointed out by our interviewee who works as an advisor for a US local politician in response to the question “Did you have any roles related to politics, policy, or lobbying before that?” See also the section above on “Is the career capital transferable to other roles at animal advocacy nonprofits?” Courtney, Chris, and Camilla made similar points.

<sup>76</sup> However, there may be substantial differences. For example, political roles tend to be less narrowly focused than lobbying roles. This concern was raised by Hermes (see the question beginning “Do you think that lobbying roles...”).

<sup>77</sup> Examples include:

- [Maneka Gandhi](#), an Indian politician (a former government minister), founder of People for Animals, and prominent animal advocate,
- [Meret Schneider](#), executive co-directors of Sentience Politics, who was elected to the National Council for the Greens in Switzerland,
- [Justin Brannan](#), a city counsellor in New York, a self-described “animal rights activist.”

Additionally, Courtney believed that some “lobbyists will then start working for lawmakers.”

<sup>78</sup> See the answers by our interviewee who works as an advisor for a US local politician (in response to the question beginning “Do you think that lobbying roles...”) and our first anonymous UK civil service interviewee (in response to the question “What makes great...”). Our second anonymous UK civil service interviewee didn’t seem to think it would matter much if you didn’t emphasise it at interview (see the question beginning “How transferable...”). Consider also the idea that “[You have a set amount of ‘weirdness points’](#)” and need to “spend them wisely.”

<sup>79</sup> Consider the finding from surveys by [CEA \(2019\)](#) and 80,000 Hours ([2018](#) and [2017](#)) that “Government and policy experts” are rated as the most needed skill or ability for “EA as a whole.” You might also be interested in 80,000 Hours’ “[guide to working in AI policy and strategy](#)” and Charity Entrepreneurship’s thoughts on lobbying for tobacco taxation to improve global health ([here](#) and [here](#)).

If you’re planning to keep your options open in this manner, you might want to focus your early career on more flexible credentials. For example, this would make political science or public policy academic training more appealing than specialist academic training and expertise relating to animal agriculture or food policy.

<sup>80</sup> Many of our interviewees emphasised this, as did [Tom Kalil](#), various profiles by 80,000 Hours, and the [report on careers in politics and policy in Germany](#). Additionally, Frank R. Baumgartner et al.'s [book](#) on US lobbying notes that “over and over again, we heard lobbyists tell us how critical personal contact was. A corporate lobbyist working on an energy bill joked that he relied on “traditional shoe leather lobbying” so much that members of Congress “would jump under their desks” to avoid having to talk to him again about the issue.”

<sup>81</sup> See the answer from our interviewee who works as an advisor for a US local politician to “How transferable do you think...” This was also [discussed by Tom Kalil](#), who worked in the White House for many years.

<sup>82</sup> See the answer from our interviewee who works as an advisor for a US local politician. This was [discussed by Tom Kalil](#), who worked in the White House for many years.

<sup>83</sup> See footnote ?.

<sup>84</sup> See the answers by Alexandra, Raphaël (in answer to the question beginning “How transferable...”), and Camilla. Mark commented that he saw “less value in becoming a specialised lobbyist on a particular issue [e.g. veggie burger labelling, across geographies] than on becoming an expert on a particular domain” or geography, e.g. in a particular state or legislature. Additionally, a connection who had worked with two UK MPs told us that there was a “clear difference” between lobbyists or organisations that are good at political briefings (who “understand the processes and steps” of the institutions that they are lobbying) and those are not. They noted that you would be able to get a lot from speaking to people and Googling but that “you don’t know what you don’t know” if you just do it remotely.

<sup>85</sup> See the answers by Courtney and Alexandra.

<sup>86</sup> See the answers by Courtney and Chris.

<sup>87</sup> See the answers by Mark and Camilla (see also the answer to the question “Did you have any roles related to politics, policy, or lobbying before that?”). Our interviewee who worked for a US local politician also suggested this.

<sup>88</sup> See the answers by Courtney and Chris. Courtney suggested that experience in overlapping or related social issues, such as environmental protection, could also be helpful.

<sup>89</sup> See the answers by Mark and Raphaël. Camilla also emphasised the importance of communication skills.

<sup>90</sup> See the answers by Raphaël, Chris (in response to the question beginning “What makes great...”), and Camilla. This was also mentioned to us in a conversation with a former senior political advisor in the UK who now works in a lobbying role. 80,000 Hours has a [guest blog post](#) that recommends this. Interestingly, our second anonymous UK civil service interviewee noted, without prompting, that to work in the civil service, you don’t “need to read the news every day.”

<sup>91</sup> See the answers from our interviewee who works for a US local politician, Raphaël, and Camilla.

<sup>92</sup> See the answers from our USDA interviewee, both UK civil service interviewees, Mark, and Alexandra. Similarly, a [report on careers in politics and policy in Germany](#) described subject matter expertise as “secondary” to generalist social and communication skills for political aides, though there are also some “Specialist policy advice” roles for the *Fraktionen* (parliamentary groups).

<sup>93</sup> Contrast the answers from our USDA interviewee and [Tom Kalil](#), a political appointee in the US White House, with our UK civil service interviewees.

<sup>94</sup> See the answers from our anonymous USDA interviewee, Catalina, Camilla, our first anonymous UK civil service interviewee, and our interviewee who works as an advisor for a US local politician. This was also recommended by 80,000 Hours ([here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)) and a [report on careers in politics and policy in Germany](#).



<sup>95</sup> See the answers from our anonymous USDA interviewee, Catalina, Courtney, Alexandra, Mark, Raphaël, Chris, and Camilla. This was also suggested by 80,000 Hours ([here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)), [Tom Kalil](#), and a [report on careers in politics and policy in Germany](#). Mark commented that this was more important for those focusing on regulation rather than legislation)

<sup>96</sup> See the answers from Courtney, Raphaël, Chris, and our interviewee who works as an advisor for a US local politician. This was also recommended by a [report on careers in politics and policy in Germany](#).

<sup>97</sup> See the answers by Courtney and Chris. This was also recommended by 80,000 Hours ([here](#) and [here](#)).

<sup>98</sup> See the answers from our anonymous USDA interviewee, Alexandra, Hermes, and our interviewee who works as an advisor for a US local politician. Our first anonymous UK civil service interviewee also mentioned this, though he thought it was less important. Though not focusing on animal advocacy, specialist expertise was also [suggested by Tom Kalil](#), a political appointee in the White House.

<sup>99</sup> See the answers from Hermes and Catalina.

<sup>100</sup> See the answers by Courtney and Raphaël. Camilla's comments about communications experience (e.g. see the answer to the question "Did you have any roles related to government, policy, or lobbying before that?") also seem relevant.

<sup>101</sup> See the answer from our interviewee who works as an advisor for a US local politician. Though not mentioning MBAs specifically, 80,000 Hours [note](#) that "In the US, it's also common to enter from... a career in business.

<sup>102</sup> See the answer by Mark, though he commented: "it's unclear to me whether that's helpful but a lot of people have them."

<sup>103</sup> See the answer by Mark.

<sup>104</sup> See the answer by Camilla.

<sup>105</sup> See the answer from our interviewee who works as an advisor for a US local politician.

<sup>106</sup> See the answers by Courtney, Mark, Chris, and Camilla.