Behavioral Insights Group: Careers Resource Guide

Overview of Behavioral Science and Policy

When Cass Sunstein and Richard Thaler published *Nudge* in 2008, it would have been difficult to imagine the unprecedented interest in behavioral economics and behavioral science that followed. Governments and organizations, it turns out, are hungry for solutions that work, and behavioral science provides low-cost, high-impact answers for society’s most pressing problems. Behavioral scientists, including the faculty in the Behavioral Insights Group (BIG), have long been studying how making actions and decisions easy and attractive, rather than cumbersome, dramatically improves human decision making, and outcomes for society.

Worldwide, behavioral science is becoming an essential item in the toolkit of policy makers at every level of government. The United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Singapore, Australia, Brazil, Jamaica, Guatemala, Mexico, and the United States all have established or emerging behavioral insights teams. Countless more cities and regional governments, NGOs, and other policy-based organizations are looking to create such teams.

Behavioral science has been applied to the following policy areas: agriculture, consumer protection, health, justice, taxation, transportation, and many more. From addressing road congestion and safety to increasing organ donation, behavioral science has made an impact on policy-making worldwide.

How Do I Get Involved?

A passion for high-impact, low-cost policy changes that are evidence-based is an essential starting point for working in the field. The skills organizations ask for vary, but usually include:

- Knowledge and understanding of relevant policy, usually including field experience
- Strategic planning and conceptual thinking
- Project/program management
- Statistical knowledge (including experience with R or Stata)
- Understanding of (and sometimes experience running) randomized control trials
- Ability to attract and manage a multidisciplinary team
- Ability to translate behavioral science knowledge to a lay audience
- Ability to adapt and find opportunities in failures/setbacks.

Who Is Doing This Work?

Some organizations focus entirely on behavioral science applications to policy and provide consulting services to client organizations, including:

- The Behavioural Insights Team ([www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk](http://www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk)), based out of the United Kingdom, with offices in New York, Singapore, and Australia
- ideas42 ([www.ideas42.org](http://www.ideas42.org)) with offices in New York, Washington, DC, and Boston
Other organizations make it a part of their broader policy and business platform, including:

- J-PAL
- Google
- USAID
- World Bank
- OECD
- Facebook
- Donors Choose
- European Commission
- Rare
- Financial Conduct Authority
- Consumer Financial Protection Bureau
- MDRC
- Yelp
- Student Social Support Lab
- OPower

Governments worldwide are working to create behavioral science teams, including:

- The United States (the White House Social and Behavioral Sciences Team is the hub, but cities across the US are also starting to employ behavioral science)
- Canada
- The Netherlands
- Singapore
- Australia (Federal and NSW)
- Brazil
- Israel
- Germany
- Italy

Courses/Content Knowledge

Students interested in behavioral science can see a list of relevant courses on the Behavioral Insights Group website (http://cpl.hks.harvard.edu/behavioral-insights-group), but may specifically be interested in:

- UK and the Netherlands Immersive Field Course: Behavioral Insights (MLD 335Y)
- Behavioral Economics and Public Policy (API-304)
- Behavioral Science of Negotiations (MLD-224)
- Behavioral Economics & Global Health (GHP237-01)
- Science of Behavior Change (MLD-304)
- Behavioral Economics, Law and Public Policy (API-305)

Need More Information?

- Follow BIG on Twitter: https://twitter.com/HarvardBIG
- Join the Behavioral Insights Study Group e-mail: http://cpl.hks.harvard.edu/student-resources
- Check Out Our Jobs Board: http://harvardbehavioralinsightsgroup.tumblr.com/
- Harvard Kennedy School students can check out JACK to find job/internship opportunities focused on keywords “Behavioral Science/Insights”
- Check Out BE-Recruit Jobs Board: http://www.be-recruit.com/jobs/

To discuss opportunities for PAEs, internships, and more, contact:

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