

Upturn Compensation Policy

Last updated: October 3, 2025

Overview

Upturn's compensation policy is guided by three key values:

- **Equity.** Everyone is compensated within positions and across the organization based on their position, skills, and qualifications, without regard to protected status. This policy intends to reduce the potential for bias.
- **Predictability.** Everyone can predict their future compensation, with minimal surprise to compensation changes.
- **Attractiveness and retention.** Upturn offers highly competitive compensation and can attract and retain a great and diverse staff.

This policy provides guidelines that Upturn considers when setting salary, awarding salary increases, and granting promotions. Nothing in the policy creates contractual obligations of any kind, or guarantees any salary, any salary increase, or any advancement. Notwithstanding any provision in this policy, salary and advancement decisions for staff are made in the sole and exclusive discretion of the Executive Director, and salary decisions for the Executive Director are made in the sole and exclusive discretion of the Board of Directors. Upturn is not bound by the provisions of this policy and may make exceptions to its administration where, at the discretion of the Executive Director or the Board of Directors, such exceptions are warranted. This policy is subject to change at any time by the Executive Director or the Board of Directors, as conditions or circumstances may require, and with or without prior notice.

Salary and Promotions

Base salary for each role is set based on the extent to which the role is responsible and accountable for Upturn's strategy, direction, development, programmatic impact, and overall success, as well as the biennial external salary analysis and the market conditions for particular skills. Certain roles have base salary "steps," reflecting additional years of relevant experience.

- **Limiting ratio.** The difference in base salary between the highest- and lowest-paid employee should not exceed a ratio of 3:1.

Salary increases typically occur once each year, on the first day of the month immediately following an employee's annual hire date anniversary.

- Subject to budgetary constraints and the limiting ratio, the current standard salary increase is \$5,000. If an employee assumes a new role, the standard salary increase is instead the base salary for that role.

Role advancement. For employees on the policy and operations tracks, promotions into new roles are expected to occur at regular intervals, as indicated below. For example, currently, Research Associates are expected to advance to Policy Analyst on a two-year timeline.

All supervisors — in particular all Directors — should mentor other staff and provide opportunities and guidance to help them grow into new roles. At the same time, all staff are expected to take responsibility for their job performance and professional development.

Policy Track

- Research Associate (RA)
 - RA1 \$65,000
 - RA2 \$70,000
 - *Estimated promotion target to Policy Analyst: 2 years*
- Policy Analyst (PA)
 - PA1 \$75,000
 - PA2 \$80,000
 - *Estimated promotion target to Senior Policy Analyst: 2 years*
- Senior Policy Analyst (SPA)
 - SPA1 \$90,000
 - SPA2 \$95,000
 - SPA3 and on *Salary increases per standard raise policy.*
 - *In order to be promoted to PD, an SPA must first (1) have demonstrated excellence in proactively performing all their SPA roles and responsibilities and*

(2) notify the Executive Director that they would like to seek a promotion. See the SPA to PD Promotion Framework for more details.

- Project Director (PD)
 - PD1 \$110,000
 - PD2 \$115,000
 - PD3 \$120,000
 - PD4 \$125,000
 - *Estimated promotion target to Senior Project Director: 4 years*
- Senior Project Director (SPD)
 - SPD1 \$130,000
 - SPD2 and on *Salary increases per standard raise policy.*

Quantitative Track

- Senior Quantitative Analyst \$130,000
Salary increases per standard raise policy.

Operations Track

- Operations Associate (OA)
 - OA1 \$65,000
 - OA2 \$70,000
 - OA3 \$75,000
 - OA4 \$80,000
 - *Estimated promotion target to Senior Operations Associate: 4 years*
- Senior Operations Associate (SOA)
 - SOA1 \$90,000
 - SOA2 \$95,000
 - SOA3 and on *Salary increases per standard raise policy.*

Executive Team

- Executive Director \$195,000
 - *The Board of Directors is responsible for setting the Executive Director compensation and performing periodic review to ensure that their compensation is reasonable and in accordance with IRS requirements.*
- Director of Programs \$160,000
 - Salary increases per standard raise policy.*
- Director of Operations \$160,000
 - Salary increases per standard raise policy.*

Temporary Positions

- Summer Fellow \$1,250 per week

Hiring

Upturn extends job offers for particular roles and steps, taking into consideration applicants' qualifications, education, training, and experience. Upturn does not negotiate salary for a given role and step.

Final decisions about job offers are made by the Executive Director.

Periodic Reviews

Annual internal policy and salary review

On at least an annual basis, typically in September, the Executive Director and the Operations Director will review individual salaries across the organization for consistency with the values underlying this compensation policy. They will also review whether this compensation policy is, on balance, meeting the needs of the organization. This review will consider such things as hiring decisions and outcomes, role changes, salary changes, organizational resources, and other organizational changes during the year.

Biennial external compensation review

On at least a biennial basis, the Executive Director and Operations Director will conduct an external salary analysis across all positions, to compare Upturn with similarly situated organizations.

This review will consider reputable third-party salary surveys, as well as salary figures shared directly with us by our peer organizations, to assess the competitiveness of Upturn's compensation program with other comparable public interest nonprofit organizations in the Washington, D.C. metro area. Based on the review, the Executive Director may make adjustments as needed to the base salaries for each role and to other provisions of this policy.

Employee Benefits

Upturn is a growing organization that is collaborative, energetic, and fun. We are actively committed to building an inclusive and welcoming workplace. We cultivate a flexible and accommodating work culture, and we provide competitive benefits and staff-centered policies. For regular, full-time employees, we provide:

- 100% employer-covered health, dental, vision, and disability insurance;
- 403(b) retirement plan with a 10% employer contribution;
- open paid-time off and flexible work hours;
- employer-sponsored medical and dependent care FSAs;
- a monthly home office reimbursement;
- paid sabbaticals after five years of full-time work; and
- annual professional development fund.