Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service  
Policy and Program Development  
Policy Analysis and Development  

Economist  
GS-0110-11/12/13  

Note: This position will be filled as a GS-11-12-13 multi-grade career ladder. Attached responsibilities are at the Full Performance Level. At developmental grade levels, assignments will be of more limited scope, performed with less independence and may reflect limited complexity and personal contacts. At the developmental level, the incumbent will be acquiring the background necessary to function at the Full Performance Level.

I. INTRODUCTION

Incumbent serves as Staff Economist on the Policy Analysis and Development Staff (PAD), Policy and Program Development (PPD), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). PAD is responsible for preparing a wide variety of economic and policy analyses relating to all phases of the Agency’s programs and their impacts. Projects involve economic data gathering, analysis, interpretation, and presentation of findings, and range across the Agency’s program areas.

II. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The incumbent provides authoritative support and leadership in the field of economics to APHIS and PPD management and staff, in particular, in the area of livestock economics. Prepares economic analyses and provides economic advice in support of APHIS rulemaking and for Agency pre-decisional actions, especially with regard to livestock and animal health. Competently performs all analytical tasks including the design of appropriate methodologies and use of complex computer-based mathematical models for evaluating economic impacts, identifying relevant data requirements, collecting and analyzing information, and presenting the results in a professional manner. These analyses require the integration of economics with knowledge of various agricultural disciplines, foremost livestock and animal health issues.

Provides expert assistance to APHIS decision makers on the domestic and international economic impacts of animal health issues. In particular, the incumbent serves as a PAD resource concerning the application of cost-benefit analysis, statistical analysis, and other approaches for evaluation of the prevention, control, or eradication of animal pests and diseases. As a leading participant in major projects, the economist uses innovative approaches for the economic analysis of unique and unprecedented problems. Incumbent also provides technical expertise for review and assessment of work accomplished by other economists and statisticians.

Provides leadership in developing the knowledge base and data needed to conduct analyses related to agency’s programs focused on animal health. The incumbent works closely with Agency program staff in understanding emerging issues and needs and to provide advice on economic impacts of alternative options under consideration.
Develops applications for economic analysis and distributes to peers in USDA, industry and academia for review, modification and implementation. Provides peer review input for economic hypotheses and models developed by other economists. Prepares and delivers oral and written presentations for meetings within the Department and with other agencies on analyses for which the incumbent is responsible. Effectively represents PAD and APHIS in meetings and make presentations at scientific, technical, and program review meetings and workshops.

III. EVALUATION FACTORS

Knowledge Required for the Position

1. Expert level knowledge of agricultural and trade economic theory including macro and micro-economic concepts, principles, and practices; skills sufficient to modify standard practices of research or analysis and adapt economic principles or statistical techniques to analyze and evaluate complex, interrelated questions or problems. The position requires knowledge of a broad range of quantitative subjects and techniques.

2. Expertise in applying economic theories and analytical techniques to address animal health issues.

3. Ability to develop cost-benefit and policy analyses as well as provide expert advice on economic impacts related to Agency programs focused on livestock and animal health.

4. Ability to proficiently communicate technical and non-technical information orally and in writing.

IV. SUPERVISORY CONTROL

The incumbent is under the supervision of the PAD Chief. Assignments are characterized by broad general objectives; the details for attaining these objectives are left to the incumbent. The incumbent has wide latitude for personal initiative and independent planning and execution of the work. Review of work consists of appraisal of accomplishments as reflected in reports and effectiveness of policy advice and assistance provided to Agency top management and program staff. Since the incumbent's completed work is considered technically authoritative, it is normally reviewed only for adequacy in accomplishing objectives, influence on program development and adherence to agency policies.

V. GUIDELINES

Broad guidelines are found in Department and Agency policies, regulations, and directives; APHIS mission statements; basic legislation; and strategic plans. The incumbent is expected to interpret existing guidelines as applicable to specific studies. The incumbent is recognized as an authority in livestock economics and is expected to use professional knowledge and creativity to resolve unprecedented technical problems.
VI. COMPLEXITY

Project assignments require the incumbent to conduct studies and cooperate in research projects covering a wide range of services and programs. The complexity of assignments is evidenced by technical requirements of the position: (1) perception necessary to recognize, understand and explain significant (and possibly subtle) variations from expected findings; (2) initiative and knowledge sufficient to select; modify or develop study approaches to meet unexpected or altered conditions; and (3) imagination necessary to suggest investigations based on observations in unrelated areas. They involve structuring broad objectives and redefining or further defining subjects where the variables involved are extensive and complex in their relationships. Synthesize and critique data and information obtained from government, academic, and private sector sources. Obtain new data for economic analysis via surveys, expert panels and other accepted techniques. Determine the nature and scope of a problem in terms of compromises to be made among technical considerations, time, cost and other practical constraints. Assess and use appropriate analytical approaches such as microeconomics, econometrics, and statistical techniques.

VII. SCOPE AND EFFECT

The purpose of the work is the formulation and execution of economic analyses of policy issues, including the identification of viable options, the assessment of impacts of those options, and the development of recommendations. Incumbent provides management officials with a wide range of analytic services to advise them in selecting the most appropriate policy responses for accomplishing Agency goals. Incumbent’s actions and recommendations directly affect the determination of Agency policies and have substantial impact upon the Agency’s relationships with agricultural stakeholders, particularly the livestock industries.

VIII. PERSONAL CONTACTS

Contacts are with Agency and Department professional staffs, theAPHIS and PPD Management Teams, officials from other Federal agencies and from regulated industries, university professors, and professional economists in the private sector.

IX. PURPOSE OF CONTACTS

Contacts are to obtain data and information necessary to conduct economic analyses, and to present, explain and defend Agency analyses, policies and standards. Organizes and participates in professional discussions and projects on animal health issues.

X. PHYSICAL DEMAND

The work is usually sedentary, however, it may be necessary to carry and/or lift projecting equipment, reports, publications, and similar objects from time to time. Occasional travel may be required, and handling/carrying equipment may occasionally be needed.

XI. WORK ENVIRONMENT
The work is performed in an office setting.