

CAREER ROADMAP

# How to Get a Compliance Job: Career Guide 2026

Explore compliance careers, job titles, salaries, skills, certifications and practical steps for entering regulatory, corporate or technology compliance.

IN THIS ROADMAP

- Key takeaways
- What does a compliance professional do?
- Common compliance job titles
- Compliance, risk and audit: what is the difference?
- Skills employers look for
- Compliance salary and outlook

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A free career roadmap from GRC Careers · AGJ, the AI governance job board

Read the latest version, and browse live compliance jobs, at [ai-governance-jobs.com/ai-governance-career-guides/how-to-get-a-compliance-job](https://ai-governance-jobs.com/ai-governance-career-guides/how-to-get-a-compliance-job)

Compliance professionals help organizations understand and meet legal, regulatory, contractual and internal requirements. To get a compliance job, candidates need strong research, documentation, judgment and communication skills, plus working knowledge of the rules that affect their target industry.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

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- Compliance is a large occupation, not a single narrow specialty. BLS counted approximately 418,000 U.S. compliance officer jobs in 2024.
- The BLS reported median annual pay of \$78,420 in May 2024, with the highest 10 percent earning more than \$130,030.
- Career changers can enter from legal operations, healthcare, finance, public administration, HR, audit, cybersecurity, quality and program management.

## WHAT DOES A COMPLIANCE PROFESSIONAL DO?

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A compliance professional determines what an organization must do, translates those obligations into workable controls and gathers evidence that the requirements are being met.

Daily work may include regulatory research, policy writing, training, monitoring, investigations, audit preparation, control testing, issue management and reporting. The precise work depends heavily on the industry. Healthcare compliance looks different from banking compliance, export controls, research compliance or AI compliance.

## COMMON COMPLIANCE JOB TITLES

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1. Compliance coordinator
2. Compliance analyst
3. Regulatory compliance specialist
4. Compliance officer
5. Compliance manager
6. Ethics and compliance manager
7. Healthcare compliance officer
8. Security compliance analyst
9. AI compliance manager
10. Director or chief compliance officer

## COMPLIANCE, RISK AND AUDIT: WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

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Compliance asks whether requirements are being met. Risk management asks what uncertainty could prevent the organization from meeting its objectives. Audit independently tests processes and controls. In practice, the three functions work closely together, but their mandates and reporting relationships should remain clear.

## SKILLS EMPLOYERS LOOK FOR

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- Regulatory research and interpretation
- Policy and procedure writing
- Control mapping and evidence management
- Monitoring and testing
- Investigations and issue documentation
- Training and stakeholder communication

- Data analysis and reporting
- Professional judgment and discretion
- Industry-specific knowledge
- Familiarity with compliance or GRC platforms

The work rewards people who can turn complex requirements into steps that operating teams can actually follow.

## COMPLIANCE SALARY AND OUTLOOK

The figures below are calculated from the 112 live Compliance postings on AI-Governance-Jobs.com, of which **60** publish a salary range. This is original market data from our own board, not a survey and not an editorial estimate.

| Level                   | Median midpoint                                                                                  | Middle half     | Postings |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------|
| Mid-level               |  <b>\$101k</b>  | \$86k – \$130k  | 29       |
| Senior / lead / manager |  <b>\$151k</b>  | \$112k – \$178k | 22       |
| Director                |  <b>\$212k</b> | \$190k – \$220k | 7        |

**Representative titles in this sample:** Quality Assurance Specialist, Compliance Manager, Director, Governance, QUALITY ASSURANCE SPECIALIST, Chief Compliance Officer, Records and Information Management Specialist, Accountant.

### ► Methodology and cautions

## HOW TO GET A COMPLIANCE JOB

1. **Choose an industry.** Employers hire for knowledge of healthcare, finance, government contracting, privacy, cybersecurity, research, energy or another regulated setting.
2. **Learn the rule set.** Know the principal laws, regulators, standards and contractual expectations in that industry.
3. **Practice the core work.** Draft a policy, map a requirement to a control, build a monitoring plan and write an issue summary.
4. **Translate prior experience.** Show how previous work involved rules, documentation, investigations, quality, risk or stakeholder accountability.
5. **Apply to bridge roles.** Coordinator, analyst, audit support, licensing, quality and regulatory operations positions can provide an entry route.
6. **Build credibility selectively.** Choose a certification that matches the target specialty rather than collecting unrelated initials.

## CERTIFICATIONS

Useful credentials vary by specialty:

- Certified Compliance and Ethics Professional for general corporate compliance.
- Certified in Healthcare Compliance for healthcare.
- Certified Anti-Money Laundering Specialist for AML.
- IAPP privacy credentials for privacy compliance.
- CISA, CRISC, CGRC or security certifications for technology compliance.
- Artificial Intelligence Governance Professional for AI governance and compliance.

Certifications can help demonstrate a knowledge base, but experience applying requirements remains more persuasive than a credential alone.

## TRANSFERABLE BACKGROUNDS

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Legal assistants, contract administrators, auditors, HR professionals, healthcare administrators, investigators, policy analysts, project managers, quality professionals and public administrators often have useful transferable skills.

A strong transition résumé does not merely say “detail-oriented.” It shows examples of interpreting rules, documenting decisions, escalating issues, training others and protecting institutional integrity.

## SOURCES AND UPDATE NOTES

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- [BLS Occupational Outlook Handbook: Compliance Officers](#)
- [BLS national wage data, May 2025](#)
- [IAPP Salary and Jobs Report 2025–26](#)

**Internal links for publication:** Compliance Jobs, AI Compliance Jobs, Regulatory Compliance Jobs, Compliance Analyst Jobs, Compliance Manager Jobs, certification comparison and job alerts.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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### Do I need a law degree to work in compliance?

No. Most compliance jobs do not require a JD. Legal training is valuable for some regulatory and counsel roles, but operational compliance teams include professionals from many backgrounds.

### Is compliance a good career?

It can offer stable, portable work across regulated industries. Advancement depends on developing industry expertise, judgment and the ability to influence operations.

### Can I get a compliance job without experience?

Yes, especially through coordinator, licensing, audit-support, quality or regulatory-operations roles. Candidates should demonstrate relevant documentation and rule-based work from prior positions.

### Does compliance require math?

Most roles require comfort with basic analysis and reporting, not advanced mathematics. Financial crime, quantitative monitoring and model compliance may require stronger analytical skills.

### What is the difference between a compliance analyst and compliance officer?

Titles vary. Analysts often research requirements and maintain evidence, while officers may own a program, advise leadership or hold formal accountability.

### What industries hire compliance professionals?

Financial services, healthcare, government, higher education, technology, energy, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, insurance and nonprofits all employ compliance staff.

### Can compliance lead to executive leadership?

Yes. Experienced professionals can progress to director, vice president, chief compliance officer, chief risk officer or broader governance leadership.

### Is AI changing compliance work?

Yes. Compliance teams are governing organizational AI use while also adopting automation for monitoring, research, evidence collection and reporting.

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