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Great Places to Work

By Sherri Dalphonse, Ellen McLellan, Wayne Nelson, and Cindy Rich

Here's who offers the best pay and benefits, most flexible schedules, interesting work, and chances to learn and grow. Good news—they're hiring.



American Enterprise Institute

What it is: Public-policy think tank.

Number of employees: 142.

Interesting perk: A top-floor dining room with waitstaff serves three-course gourmet lunches for \$4, 50-cent breakfasts, and free muffins and cookies.

Perhaps it's no surprise that at a right-of-center think tank, the healthcare plan is structured with a good dose of personal responsibility. AEI employees can choose one of three coverage options—two of which provide incentive to monitor medical spending, as the employee gets money back if a certain deductible is not met.

AEI, founded in 1943, is one of the country's oldest think tanks. It researches everything from trade to social welfare to tax policy. Among its 55 scholars and fellows are such conservative icons as Lynne Cheney, Newt Gingrich, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Irving Kristol, and Richard Perle.

"AEI is a very stimulating intellectual environment," says research assistant Bryan O'Keefe. "This is an excellent atmosphere for somebody who cares about big ideas."

It's a policy wonk's dream. Employees can get free books written by its scholars, and there are frequent lectures and panels. People may spend the day thinking and reading.

There are less-scholarly pursuits: weekly happy hours, an annual black-tie dinner, a Fourth of July party on the roof, and a softball team whose name is decided each year by a contest. This past summer the name on players' T-shirts was the Nationalists; last year, the Preemptive Strikes.

Like most think tanks, AEI has a barbell-shaped workforce—scholars at one end and, at the other, young staffers who stay a few years and then move on or go back to school. It's rare for a research assistant to be promoted to scholar, but AEI offers a chance to meet big names and count them as references. "AEI is a great place to launch a career," says executive vice president David Gerson.

In another nod to personal responsibility, AEI rewards merit, not tenure, with raises of 0 to 30 percent.

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More than 50 employers that offer great pay and benefits, interesting work, flexible schedules, and a chance to learn and grow



American Enterprise Institute
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