USER GUIDE — EDITION 1

SalaryScopePro.com User Guide

Complete Guide to Using the Salary Intelligence & Compensation Analysis Platform

Platform	SalaryScopePro.com
Coverage	United States & Canada
Audience	Employees, job seekers, managers, recruiters, HR, compensation analysts, executives
Document	SalaryScopePro_User_Guide.pdf

This guide explains how to use every calculator, salary intelligence tool, compensation analysis system, career planning resource, benchmarking system, salary database feature, reporting system, dashboard, and research center available on the platform.

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1. Welcome

Welcome to SalaryScopePro — a comprehensive salary intelligence and compensation analysis platform built for professionals across the United States and Canada. This guide will help you understand every tool, calculator, and research resource on the platform, and how to apply them to real career decisions.

Whether you are negotiating a new offer, evaluating a relocation, planning a promotion, or building a compensation model for your team, this guide walks through each capability step by step.

> **How to use this guide.** Read the Platform Overview first, then jump to the specific calculator, report, or workflow you need. Every chapter is self-contained, so you can navigate by use case.

2. What Is SalaryScopePro?

SalaryScopePro is a salary intelligence platform that combines public labor-market data with proprietary scoring, geographic adjustments, after-tax modeling, and long-term career projections. It is designed to answer four core questions:

- What is fair pay for this role, in this city, at this experience level?
- How does this compensation translate after taxes and cost of living?
- Where am I positioned in the market — and how can I improve that position?
- What is the long-term financial trajectory of this career path?

Who the platform serves

- Employees benchmarking current pay and planning their next raise.
- Job seekers evaluating offers across cities, industries, and employers.
- Career changers modeling the financial impact of pivots.
- Managers and HR teams designing compensation bands.
- Recruiters calibrating offers to market reality.
- Compensation analysts running detailed market studies.
- Executives reviewing workforce and pay strategy at portfolio scale.

3. Getting Started

Step 1 — Identify your goal

Start by deciding what decision you are trying to support: a salary review, a job offer, a relocation, a promotion, or a long-range career plan. Each goal maps to a specific set of tools described later in this guide.

Step 2 — Open the relevant tool

Use the top navigation to reach the Opportunity Center, Atlas, Calculators, Career OS, or Research areas. Every tool accepts a small set of inputs (role, location, experience, salary) and produces a structured result you can interpret with the help of this guide.

Step 3 — Save and revisit

Save occupations, cities, and reports to your dashboard so you can track changes over time. Personal data stays on your device unless you explicitly opt into account features.

4. Platform Overview

SalaryScopePro is organized into seven interconnected systems. Each system answers a different question but draws on the same underlying data model so results stay internally consistent.

The seven systems

- Salary Intelligence — calculators and benchmarks for current pay.
- Compensation Analysis — total rewards, bands, equity, and bonus modeling.
- Geographic Intelligence — city, state, and province comparisons with cost-of-living adjustments.
- Career Intelligence — pathways, promotions, transitions, and long-range projections.
- Research Institute — methodology, indexes, rankings, and published studies.
- Career Operating System — personalized dashboard, goals, alerts, and recommendations.
- Opportunity Network — the National Opportunity Index, Atlas, Corridors, and Future Opportunity Observatory.

How to interpret information on the platform

All figures are estimates derived from public labor-market data and modeled multipliers. Treat them as decision-support inputs, not guarantees. Always combine platform results with your own knowledge of the employer, team, and offer details.

5. Salary Intelligence System

The Salary Intelligence system covers everything related to current pay: what a role typically earns, what you personally should earn, and how that compares against the market.

Core components

- Occupation profiles — base pay ranges (P10, median, P90) by role.

- City modifiers — cost-of-living indices that adjust the national baseline.
- Experience multipliers — entry, mid, senior, and lead level adjustments.
- Tax engines — federal, state/provincial, FICA, CPP, and EI.
- Score engines — proprietary 0–100 metrics described in Chapter 21.

6. Salary Calculators

Every calculator follows the same pattern: provide a small set of inputs, review the result, and use the interpretation guidance to act on it. Below is the reference for each calculator on the platform.

Salary Comparison by City	
Purpose	Compare typical pay for one role across multiple cities.
When to use	Evaluating relocation, remote-pay negotiations, or multi-city offers.
Required inputs	Occupation and one or more cities.
Optional inputs	Experience level.
Outputs	Nominal salary, cost-of-living-adjusted purchasing power, and housing impact per city.
Interpretation	A higher nominal salary is not always better. Check the adjusted purchasing power column to see what each offer is actually worth in local terms.
Common mistakes	Ignoring tax differences across states or provinces; comparing only headline pay.

What Should I Earn?	
Purpose	Estimate fair compensation for your specific situation.
When to use	Before a salary review, performance conversation, or job application.
Required inputs	Occupation, city, and experience level.
Optional inputs	Certifications, education premium, employer size.
Outputs	Recommended salary range with P10, median, and P90 anchor points.
Interpretation	Use the median as your anchor and the P75–P90 range as a stretch target if you have above-average experience or in-demand skills.
Common mistakes	Anchoring to the P10 because it feels safer; treating the median as the ceiling.

Salary After Taxes	
Purpose	Convert gross pay to estimated net pay.
When to use	Comparing offers across states or provinces, or planning take-home budgets.
Required inputs	Gross salary, location, filing status.
Outputs	Federal, state/provincial, payroll tax breakdown and net take-home.
Interpretation	Net pay is the only number that matters when comparing geographies with different tax regimes.
Common mistakes	Forgetting payroll taxes (FICA in the US; CPP and EI in Canada).

Promotion & Raise Calculator	
Purpose	Project the multi-year impact of a raise or promotion.
When to use	When deciding whether to push for a title change or stay at your current level.
Required inputs	Current salary, proposed new salary, time horizon.
Outputs	Year-by-year compounded salary, cumulative lifetime delta.
Interpretation	Small base increases compound significantly over 5–10 years because every future raise stacks on top.
Common mistakes	Comparing only the first-year delta and ignoring compounding.

Layoff Survival Calculator	
Purpose	Estimate financial runway during job loss.
When to use	When planning an emergency fund or assessing severance offers.
Required inputs	Liquid savings and essential monthly expenses.
Optional inputs	Severance, unemployment benefits, partner income.
Outputs	Months of runway and the date savings would be depleted.
Interpretation	Aim for 6–12 months of runway in stable conditions; more in volatile sectors.
Common mistakes	Counting illiquid retirement accounts as runway.

Freelance Rate Calculator	
Purpose	Translate a target annual income into an hourly billing rate.
When to use	When setting consulting rates or moving from salaried to contract work.
Required inputs	Target take-home, overhead, expected billable hours.
Outputs	Minimum viable hourly rate.
Interpretation	Realistic billable utilization is rarely above 60–70% of available hours.
Common mistakes	Forgetting self-employment tax, healthcare, and unbilled business-development time.

7. Compensation Analysis Tools

Compensation analysis goes beyond base salary. These tools help you model total rewards, including bonus, equity, benefits, and long-term incentives.

Total Compensation Modeling

Combine base, target bonus, equity grant, and benefits value into a single normalized total compensation figure. Use this when comparing two offers with different pay mixes.

Equity Value Estimator

Translate stock grants into expected after-vest value using growth assumptions you control. Always model multiple scenarios — conservative, baseline, and optimistic.

Compensation Band Builder

Designed for managers and HR teams: build P25 / P50 / P75 bands for any role-city combination as a starting point for internal pay structures.

8. Geographic Salary Comparison Tools

Geography is one of the largest single drivers of effective pay. The geographic tools quantify how location changes salary, cost of living, taxes, and housing.

Available views

- City vs. city comparison with COL-adjusted purchasing power.
- State and province rankings by adjusted pay for a given role.
- Workforce Atlas regional profiles.

- Opportunity Atlas tiered rankings across 27+ regions.
- Career Corridors that group economically linked metros (e.g. the Texas Triangle).

Practical example

A Software Engineer offered $180,000 in San Francisco and $145,000 in Austin may receive more spendable income in Austin once housing, taxes, and cost of living are normalized. The Salary Comparison and Cost-of-Living tools compute this directly.

9. Cost-of-Living Analysis

Cost of living determines how far a paycheck stretches. Every city has an index calibrated against a national benchmark of 100.

- Index above 100 — more expensive than the benchmark.
- Index below 100 — less expensive than the benchmark.
- Housing typically accounts for 30–50% of the variance between cities.

How to use it

When comparing offers, divide the gross salary by the cost-of-living index (divided by 100). The result is the 'real' purchasing power in benchmark dollars.

10. Salary Benchmarking System

Benchmarking answers one question: how does your pay compare to the wider market? SalaryScopePro produces benchmarks across four dimensions:

- Role — base pay range for the occupation nationally.
- Geography — adjusted pay for the specific city, state, or province.
- Experience — entry, mid, senior, and lead bands.
- Industry — sector premiums and discounts where data is available.

Reading a benchmark

Every benchmark shows P10, P50 (median), and P90 anchors. Your position relative to those anchors is your market position. The platform converts this into a 0–100 Market Position Score (Chapter 21).

11. Career Growth Tools

Career Pathways

Map realistic next-step roles based on your current occupation, including expected salary delta and time-to-transition.

Career Forecast

Project your salary 5, 10, and 20 years forward using growth rates derived from occupational outlook data.

Wealth Trajectory

Combine salary projections with savings rates and investment returns to model long-term net worth.

Career Health Score

A composite metric that blends market position, future demand, and skill portfolio strength.

12. Salary Negotiation Tools

Negotiation works best when you arrive with calibrated data, a defensible range, and a clear walk-away number.

Recommended preparation workflow

- Run 'What Should I Earn?' for your role and city.
- Pull the benchmark range and identify the P50, P75, and P90 anchors.
- Calculate the 5-year compounding impact of a 5%, 10%, and 15% increase.
- Convert each scenario to after-tax dollars to understand real impact.
- Decide your target (P75), aspiration (P90), and floor (your current or slightly above) before any conversation.

> **Anchor with data, not requests.** Frame negotiation around market evidence — 'the median for this role in this city is X' — rather than personal needs. This shifts the conversation from subjective to objective.

13. Promotion Planning Tools

Promotions are one of the highest-leverage financial events of a career. The promotion tools help you model both the conversation and the outcome.

- Promotion & Raise Calculator — quantifies the lifetime delta of a level change.
- Skill Portfolio — identifies the capabilities most associated with the next level.
- Career Strategy Planner — maps the 6–18 month sequence of actions to position for promotion.

14. Compensation Reports

Reports consolidate the platform's analysis into shareable documents. Each report type answers a specific question.

Report types

- Salary Report — current pay benchmark for a role-city combination.
- Compensation Report — total rewards breakdown including bonus and equity assumptions.
- Career Report — long-range trajectory including projected wealth.
- Benchmark Report — multi-city or multi-role comparison study.

How to interpret a report

Every report opens with an executive summary, followed by the underlying assumptions, the data tables, and a methodology note. Always read the assumptions section — it determines how much weight to place on the conclusions.

15. Salary Database

The salary database is the structured library behind every calculator. It contains:

- 800+ occupation profiles with national pay ranges and growth outlook.
- 500+ city and metro profiles with cost-of-living, housing, and population data.
- State and province tax tables for the US and Canada.
- Experience-level multipliers and industry premiums.

16. Salary Research Center

The Research Center publishes long-form studies, indexes, and rankings produced by the SalaryScopePro Research Institute. Use it when you need depth beyond a single calculator result.

- Compensation Observatory — ongoing market monitoring.
- Future of Work Lab — research on AI impact and occupational change.
- Economic Mobility Center — long-term income and wealth mobility studies.
- Workforce Atlas — regional labor-market profiles.

17. Methodology Center

The Methodology Center documents every formula, score, and data assumption used across the platform. Transparency is intentional — every published number is reproducible from the documented method.

- Salary estimation method (baseline × experience × COL).
- Tax engine assumptions and bracket sources.
- Score engines (Purchasing Power, Affordability, Market Position, etc.).
- Life Success Index and Economic Mobility methodologies.
- National Opportunity Index weighting and tiering.

18. Data Sources

SalaryScopePro draws from public labor-market data and curated reference datasets. Sources include:

- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics — Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS).
- BLS Employment Projections and Occupational Outlook Handbook.
- Statistics Canada — Labour Force Survey and occupational wage data.
- Federal, state, and provincial tax authority publications for bracket data.
- Public cost-of-living indices and housing market datasets.
- Curated occupational and industry reference data maintained by the platform.

> **Transparency note.** Every figure on the platform is an estimate derived from public data and modeled multipliers. It is decision-support information, not a guarantee of pay or outcomes.

19. User Dashboard

The dashboard is your personal command center. It surfaces saved roles, cities, reports, goals, and personalized recommendations.

Dashboard sections

- Current role snapshot with three composite scores.
- Recommended next actions tailored to your profile.
- Career goals with progress tracking.
- Saved occupations, cities, and reports.
- Active alerts for salary, market, and skill changes.
- Recent calculations history.

20. Understanding Salary Scores

Every score on the platform is normalized to a 0–100 scale and grouped into four bands: Excellent (80+), Strong (65–79), Moderate (45–64), and Weak (under 45). The next chapter breaks down each individual score.

21. Understanding Compensation Benchmarks & Scores

Salary Score

Measures nominal pay quality relative to a national benchmark. Improve it by moving into higher-paying roles, specializing, or progressing to senior levels.

Compensation Score

Blends base pay with bonus, equity, and benefits where data exists. Improve it by negotiating total rewards rather than just base.

Market Position Score

Where your reported salary sits within the role-city benchmark range. Improve it by negotiating to the P75–P90 anchor or by changing roles.

Negotiation Score

Estimates how much room exists in your current pay versus market. A high score signals strong leverage. Improve it by waiting for the right moment (offer in hand, performance review window) and arriving with data.

Career Growth Score

Combines occupational outlook with population and demand signals. Improve it by aligning toward growing roles and resilient industries.

Geographic Adjustment Score

Captures how favorable your geography is for the role after cost of living and taxes. Improve it by relocating, negotiating remote pay, or modeling tax-advantaged structures.

22. Understanding Reports

Every report follows the same structure: summary, assumptions, data, methodology. Read in that order. The summary tells you the conclusion; the assumptions tell you how much to trust it.

23. Best Practices — Getting Maximum Value

Annual compensation review

- Re-run 'What Should I Earn?' once per year.
- Re-benchmark against your city and role.
- Update your dashboard with the new salary figure.
- Set a goal for the next review cycle.

Job offer evaluation

- Convert every offer to after-tax, COL-adjusted purchasing power.
- Model the 5-year and 10-year compounded delta.
- Compare equity and bonus on the same total-comp basis.

Career planning

- Use Career Pathways to identify realistic next roles.
- Run a Wealth Trajectory projection annually.
- Track skill gaps in the Skill Portfolio.

24. Common Mistakes

- Comparing gross instead of after-tax pay across geographies.
- Anchoring negotiation on personal needs instead of market data.
- Ignoring compounding when evaluating raises.
- Treating one calculator result as a single 'right' number — every output is a range.
- Skipping the methodology section when interpreting reports.

25. Frequently Asked Questions

How often should I review my salary?

At least annually, and any time you receive a promotion, change roles, or relocate.

How should I compare two job offers?

Convert both to after-tax pay, apply each city's cost-of-living index, then add total rewards (bonus, equity, benefits) on the same basis. Only compare the normalized totals.

How do cost-of-living adjustments work?

Each city has an index calibrated to a national benchmark of 100. To compare purchasing power, divide gross or net salary by (index ÷ 100).

How should I use salary benchmarks?

As a defensible reference range, not a target. Identify the P50 (market average) and P75 (above-average) anchors, then position your ask within that range based on your specific situation.

What if my role is not in the database?

Use the closest matching occupation. The platform's occupations are mapped to standard classification systems, so most roles fit within an adjacent category.

Why do estimates differ slightly between tools?

Different tools use different assumptions (national vs. city baseline, with or without experience multipliers). The methodology section in each tool explains the exact formula.

26. Troubleshooting

- Result looks too low — check that the city and experience level are set correctly.
- Result looks too high — confirm you have not double-applied an experience multiplier and a senior-level role.
- Tax estimate looks off — verify filing status and state/province selection.
- Dashboard is empty — run any calculator once to seed your profile.

27. Future Platform Features

The platform's roadmap is organized around deepening intelligence rather than adding standalone tools. Planned directions include:

- Expanded industry-specific benchmarks.
- Deeper equity and long-term-incentive modeling.
- Additional Canadian provincial and metro coverage.
- Richer personalized recommendations driven by the Career Operating System.
- Continued publication of Research Institute studies and indexes.

> **Stay informed.** Methodology updates and new research are documented in the Methodology Center and Research Center. Both are linked from every tool footer.