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HIRING GUIDE: REGULATORY AFFAIRS 2026–2027

Life sciences | US, UK, Germany, Switzerland, Spain and Japan



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01.

INTRODUCTION

Regulatory Affairs (RA) has become one of the most business-critical functions in life sciences. What was once treated as a technical, compliance-led discipline now sits at the centre of commercial decision-making, as companies navigate tighter regulation, global launches, compressed development timelines and intensifying scrutiny. The best regulatory leaders no longer simply keep companies compliant: they shape how, when and where products reach the market.

In smaller and mid-sized organizations – particularly emerging biotech, medtech and diagnostics companies – Quality Assurance and Regulatory Affairs are frequently combined under a single QARA leader. This is especially common in medical devices and IVD, where regulatory compliance is inseparable from quality management systems, technical documentation, product lifecycle management and post-market obligations.

In larger pharmaceutical and biotechnology organizations, Regulatory Affairs operates as a distinct specialist function with its own leadership team; a reflection of the scale and complexity of global submissions, agency engagement and product lifecycle management.

If you are interested in the Quality Assurance hiring market, please download a copy of our guide here.

In 2026, the Regulatory Affairs hiring market is anything but uniform. Biotech funding constraints, organizational restructuring and more cautious hiring have made employers markedly more selective. BioSpace's 2026 Employment Outlook Report flags continued concern about the economic climate and biotech funding, yet also reports that 64% of surveyed organizations were actively recruiting and 41% expected open roles to increase in 2026.

The result is a more nuanced market than the headline figures suggest. Candidates may be more plentiful in some areas, but the supply of genuinely experienced regulatory leaders remains tight; acutely so at VP and SVP level.

Our hiring guide delves into these dynamics in more detail, reveals core employer and employee expectations and provides a salary guide.

If you require bespoke salary benchmarking or wish to discuss any of the points raised, please do get in touch.



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02.
MARKET OVERVIEW

Regulatory Affairs leadership is becoming increasingly strategic

Regulatory Affairs was long viewed as a technical, governance-led function focused on compliance and risk management. Those responsibilities remain fundamental, but the discipline now plays a decisively more strategic role within life sciences organizations.

Today's regulatory leaders sit across portfolio planning, global regulatory strategy, market-entry decisions, product development, health authority engagement and product lifecycle management. As requirements grow more complex, they are expected to shape commercial strategy and accelerate market access; not to simply guard against regulatory risk, but to actively manage the trade-offs it creates.

Regulatory Affairs is more tightly interwoven with the rest of the business than ever before. Employers now prize leaders who can operate credibly across R&D, clinical, manufacturing, operations, commercial and executive teams: holding the balance between innovation, compliance and business performance.

We continue to see strong, sustained demand for experienced Regulatory Affairs professionals, and the sharpest competition is for those who bring global regulatory strategy, agency engagement and cross-functional leadership together in a single profile.

Combined QARA leadership remains an important niche within growth-stage life sciences companies

For smaller and mid-sized life sciences companies – biotech, medtech, diagnostics and emerging pharma in particular – dual QARA leadership is increasingly common, and increasingly pivotal. These leaders own both regulatory strategy and quality systems, typically acting as the connective tissue between development, operations, clinical, manufacturing and commercial teams.

The role earns its premium at the inflection points: first-in-human studies, pivotal trials, market authorization, CE marking, FDA submission, PMDA engagement, commercial launch or geographic expansion.

The catch is supply. Most candidates lean clearly towards either Regulatory Affairs or Quality Assurance, rather than both. **Genuine dual-functional leaders who can operate at executive level across both domains are rare, and command a significant premium accordingly.**



03.

SIX KEY SKILLS EMPLOYERS ARE LOOKING FOR

1. Strategic regulatory judgment

Employers want leaders who shape global regulatory strategy, not simply administer submissions. That means setting regulatory pathways, engaging agencies directly, sequencing global filings, weighing regulatory risk and steering development teams on the decisions that make or break approval timelines.

2. Submission-ready regulatory operations

Regulatory Affairs leaders are expected to build submission and lifecycle processes that hold up under the closest agency scrutiny. Employers look for demonstrated command of dossier preparation, health authority queries, labeling, variations, post-approval changes, regulatory intelligence and lifecycle maintenance.

3. Global regulatory expertise

As life sciences companies expand internationally, regulatory leaders must understand not just individual agencies but how their environments interact and diverge. Hands-on experience across FDA, EMA, MHRA, Swissmedic, AEMPS and PMDA expectations is highly prized.

4. Cross-functional influence and executive communication

The strongest Regulatory Affairs leaders act as genuine strategic partners to R&D, clinical, manufacturing, supply chain, commercial and executive teams. What sets them apart is the ability to translate regulatory requirements and approval risk into clear, actionable business decisions.

5. Digital transformation and data capability

Digital transformation is reshaping Regulatory Affairs — from regulatory information management systems and structured content to AI-supported submissions and regulatory data analytics. Candidates who have actually led these initiatives, rather than simply lived through them, stand out.

6. Leadership through change and organisational scaling

Many senior Regulatory Affairs hires are made precisely when the stakes are highest: first approvals, commercial launches, acquisitions, market expansion, agency escalations or rapid global growth. Employers want leaders who can build teams, stand up scalable processes and hold their nerve — and the organization's — through uncertainty.



04.

SIX THINGS THAT CANDIDATES ARE LOOKING FOR

1. A clear mandate

Senior Regulatory Affairs candidates want to know exactly what they are being hired to deliver. Is the priority launch readiness, agency strategy, global submissions, market expansion, team build-out, digital transformation or post-market compliance? Vague mandates deter the most experienced candidates; particularly those who have previously inherited under-resourced or high-risk environments and know how quickly ambiguity turns into exposure.

2. Executive access

Regulatory Affairs leaders now expect a direct line to the CEO, COO, Chief Medical Officer, General Counsel, Board or relevant executive committee. The strongest candidates will simply decline roles where Regulatory Affairs is treated as a downstream, operational afterthought.

3. Realistic resources

Candidates will scrutinize whether the budget, systems, headcount and executive backing actually match the ambition. Strong Regulatory Affairs leaders are quick to spot – and quick to walk away from – companies that want world-class compliance without paying for the infrastructure to deliver it.

4. Flexibility

Regulatory Affairs remains one of the more remote-friendly life sciences functions, particularly for strategy, submissions and global policy roles. On-site presence is generally reserved for what genuinely demands it: agency meetings, inspections and key cross-functional milestones. When we asked Regulatory Affairs professionals how much flexibility still matters, the message was unambiguous: 60% told us they prefer hybrid arrangements and 28% prefer fully remote roles.

5. Career development and visibility

Manager and Director-level candidates are looking for more than a title: broader scope, international exposure, direct agency interaction, line management responsibility and a visible pathway into senior leadership.

6. Competitive compensation

Compensation remains one of the most powerful levers an employer has, especially at the top of the function. In the US in particular, regulatory leadership salaries have kept climbing, with many VP, SVP and Chief Regulatory Officer candidates now seeking more than $350,000.

05.

HIRING TRENDS

Combined QARA leadership is most common in medical device and IVD organizations, and across smaller and scaling life sciences companies in biotech, pharma and diagnostics.

These roles carry outsized influence because they fuse external regulatory strategy with internal quality governance. They are also notoriously hard to benchmark, because scope varies so widely: a dual QARA leader in a pre-commercial biotech operates in a different world from one in a global devices company or a manufacturing-heavy pharma business.

Regulatory Affairs

Regulatory Affairs hiring remains fiercely competitive, especially for candidates who combine global strategy experience, agency-facing credibility and deep product lifecycle expertise.

The most in-demand profiles include:

- global regulatory strategy leaders
- CMC regulatory specialists
- medical device and IVD regulatory leaders
- biologics and advanced therapy regulatory experts
- labeling and promotional review specialists
- regulatory intelligence professionals
- international market expansion specialists
- regulatory leaders with FDA, EMA and PMDA experience

US Director-Executive Director Regulatory Affairs roles can earn **$230K—$300K base**, while VP Regulatory Affairs roles can reach **$310K—$450K**, depending on company stage, modality, geography and equity structure.



06.

REGIONAL MARKET COMMENTARY



United States

The US is, without question, the most competitive and highest-paying market for senior Regulatory Affairs talent, concentrated in Boston/Cambridge, the San Francisco Bay Area, San Diego, Research Triangle Park, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Maryland.

Leaders with FDA-facing experience, biologics expertise, medical device knowledge, oncology exposure, CMC regulatory depth or pre-commercial launch experience command clear premiums and employers should expect to compete hard for them.



United Kingdom

The UK market is defined by its biotech, pharma, medtech and clinical research base, and by the added regulatory complexity of a post-Brexit landscape. Demand is strongest for leaders who can navigate MHRA requirements while keeping EU and US strategies aligned.

It remains a magnet for global and regional roles, particularly where companies want English-speaking regulatory leadership, strong clinical development capability and proximity to European markets.



Germany

Germany is one of Europe's most important life sciences markets, with deep strength across pharma, biotech, medtech, diagnostics and manufacturing. Demand concentrates on candidates with EU regulatory experience, agency engagement capability, lifecycle management and cross-border stakeholder management. German-language skills are an asset for local regulatory roles, while global regulatory strategy roles tend to be more English-led, depending on company structure.



Switzerland

Switzerland is a premium market for one clear reason: it concentrates global pharma headquarters, biotech, medtech and international regulatory leadership roles in a single, compact hub. Compensation typically sits above most of Europe. In return, regulatory candidates here are expected to bring genuine international experience, strong stakeholder management and the ability to operate within matrixed global organizations.



Spain

Spain continues to gain ground as a life sciences hub, particularly for clinical trials, manufacturing, pharmacovigilance, regulatory operations and shared services. Salaries typically sit below Switzerland, Germany, the UK and the US, but demand for experienced bilingual and multilingual regulatory talent is rising steadily. It is especially attractive to companies building regional EU capability, nearshore regulatory operations or dedicated regulatory support teams.



Japan

Japan remains a highly specialized market in its own right. PMDA experience, Japanese-language capability, local regulatory knowledge and cultural fluency are rarely nice-to-haves here; more often, they are non-negotiable. Global life sciences companies need leaders who can bridge headquarters expectations and Japanese regulatory reality. Candidates who pair local market credibility with international experience are exceptionally valuable, and correspondingly hard to find.



07.

SALARY GUIDES

The tables that follow set out indicative annual base salary ranges for Regulatory Affairs roles, including dual QARA leadership positions, across life sciences. They are designed to support benchmarking of senior hiring in the US, UK, Germany, Switzerland, Spain and Japan.
The salary ranges are directional and should be adjusted based on:

- company size and stage
- biotech, pharma, medtech, diagnostics or CDMO environment
- public vs. private ownership
- venture-backed or private equity-backed context
- global vs. regional scope
- product complexity
- modality, including biologics, cell and gene therapy, software as a medical device or combination products
- manufacturing footprint
- agency-facing responsibility
- inspection or remediation requirements
- bonus, equity and long-term incentive structure
- location and local labor market conditions

These ranges draw on Leonid's own 2026 placement data, calibrated against market differentials, seniority levels and established life sciences compensation patterns. They are intended as a directional benchmark rather than a precise quotation for any single role, and should be validated against live market data before final offers.

United States

Function	Role	Base salary range
Dual Functional Leaders	SVP QARA	$375,000—$500,000+
Dual Functional Leaders	VP QARA	$300,000—$450,000
Regulatory Affairs	SVP / Head of Regulatory Affairs	$350,000—$475,000+
Regulatory Affairs	VP / potential Head of Regulatory Affairs	$300,000—$425,000
Regulatory Affairs	Director, Regulatory Affairs	$200,000—$300,000
Regulatory Affairs	Sr Manager/Associate Director, Regulatory Affairs	$165,000—$225,000
Regulatory Affairs	Manager, Regulatory Affairs	$140,000—$175,000

United Kingdom

Function	Role	Base salary range
Dual Functional Leaders	SVP QARA	£200,000—£350,000+
Dual Functional Leaders	VP QARA	£160,000—£280,000
Regulatory Affairs	SVP / Head of Regulatory Affairs	£200,000—£325,000+
Regulatory Affairs	VP / potential Head of Regulatory Affairs	£155,000—£230,000
Regulatory Affairs	Director, Regulatory Affairs	£115,000—£165,000
Regulatory Affairs	Senior Manager, Regulatory Affairs	£80,000—£115,000
Regulatory Affairs	Manager, Regulatory Affairs	£65,000—£90,000

Germany

Function	Role	Base salary range
Dual Functional Leaders	SVP QARA	€230,000—€360,000+
Dual Functional Leaders	VP QARA	€175,000—€270,000
Regulatory Affairs	SVP / Head of Regulatory Affairs	€230,000—€350,000+
Regulatory Affairs	VP / potential Head of Regulatory Affairs	€170,000—€260,000
Regulatory Affairs	Director, Regulatory Affairs	€125,000—€180,000
Regulatory Affairs	Senior Manager, Regulatory Affairs	€90,000—€125,000
Regulatory Affairs	Manager, Regulatory Affairs	€75,000—€100,000

Switzerland

Function	Role	Base salary range
Dual Functional Leaders	SVP QARA	CHF 310,000—CHF 475,000+
Dual Functional Leaders	VP QARA	CHF 240,000—CHF 350,000
Regulatory Affairs	SVP / Head of Regulatory Affairs	CHF 310,000—CHF 460,000+
Regulatory Affairs	VP / potential Head of Regulatory Affairs	CHF 230,000—CHF 340,000
Regulatory Affairs	Director, Regulatory Affairs	CHF 170,000—CHF 245,000
Regulatory Affairs	Senior Manager, Regulatory Affairs	CHF 130,000—CHF 175,000
Regulatory Affairs	Manager, Regulatory Affairs	CHF 110,000—CHF 145,000

Spain

Function	Role	Base salary range
Dual Functional Leaders	SVP QARA	€180,000—€300,000+
Dual Functional Leaders	VP QARA	€150,000—€225,000
Regulatory Affairs	SVP / Head of Regulatory Affairs	€160,000—€280,000+
Regulatory Affairs	VP / potential Head of Regulatory Affairs	€160,000—€275,000
Regulatory Affairs	Director, Regulatory Affairs	€125,000—€160,000
Regulatory Affairs	Sr Manager/Associate Director, Regulatory Affairs	€100,000—€130,000
Regulatory Affairs	Manager, Regulatory Affairs	€70,000—€100,000

Japan

Function	Role	Base salary range
Dual Functional Leaders	SVP QARA	¥32,000,000—¥52,000,000+
Dual Functional Leaders	VP QARA	¥24,000,000—¥38,000,000
Regulatory Affairs	SVP / Head of Regulatory Affairs	¥32,000,000—¥50,000,000+
Regulatory Affairs	VP / potential Head of Regulatory Affairs	¥23,000,000—¥36,000,000
Regulatory Affairs	Director, Regulatory Affairs	¥16,000,000—¥25,000,000
Regulatory Affairs	Senior Manager, Regulatory Affairs	¥12,000,000—¥17,000,000
Regulatory Affairs	Manager, Regulatory Affairs	¥9,500,000—¥13,500,000

Across all six markets, employers should expect to pay more for candidates with:

- FDA, EMA, MHRA, Swissmedic, AEMPS or PMDA agency-facing experience
- global regulatory strategy experience
- biologics, cell and gene therapy or advanced therapy expertise
- medical device, IVD or combination product experience
- CMC regulatory depth
- digital health, AI or software as a medical device experience
- public company or pre-commercial launch experience
- multilingual capability, especially in Europe and Japan
- experience working in matrixed global organizations

08.

HOW EMPLOYERS CAN COMPETE FOR TALENT

Define the role clearly before going to market

Two roles with the same title can be worlds apart. A VP Regulatory Affairs role in a preclinical biotech bears little resemblance to the same job in a commercial medtech company. Before going to market, employers should be precise about product scope, geographic remit, agency exposure, team size, decision rights and the outcomes the hire is expected to own.

Benchmark compensation early

Senior Regulatory Affairs candidates are well-informed and usually not short of options. Employers should benchmark base salary, bonus, equity and benefits before the search begins and not once a preferred candidate is already at the table.

Be honest about risk

If there are delayed submissions, agency findings, weak processes or under-resourced teams, say so. Experienced Regulatory Affairs leaders are rarely deterred by complexity; but they are deterred, reliably, by surprises they uncover after signing.

Move quickly for high-value candidates

The strongest Regulatory Affairs candidates don't stay on the market for long. Slow processes, unclear feedback and changing requirements are the fastest way to lose them: often to a competitor who simply moved quicker.

Sell the impact

We repeatedly hear from Senior Regulatory Affairs professionals that they are motivated by work that matters. Employers should be ready to articulate exactly how the role drives patient access, product approval, business growth and organizational maturity.

Offer flexibility where possible

Many regulatory roles can be structured around remote or hybrid working, with on-site presence focused on agency meetings and key milestones. Where the business case allows, offering that flexibility is an easy competitive edge.



09.

ADVICE FOR CANDIDATES

Position yourself as a strategic partner

Technical expertise is a pre-requisite — but not a differentiator. What sets senior candidates apart is the ability to influence decisions, manage risk and move business objectives forward.

Show measurable outcomes

Candidates should be ready to demonstrate impact, such as:

- successful FDA, EMA, MHRA or PMDA interactions
- shortened submission timelines
- successful inspections
- improved CAPA closure rates
- reduced audit findings
- implementation of eQMS platforms
- improved regulatory approval pathways
- remediation project delivery
- product launch support

Be clear on your functional depth

For dual QARA roles, employers will want to know whether your strength sits primarily in regulatory, in quality, or is genuinely balanced across both. Being honest and specific about this builds credibility far faster than claiming to be equally strong at everything.

Build international exposure

Regulatory Affairs progression increasingly rewards global experience. Candidates who understand multiple regulatory systems and can operate confidently across cultures are simply more competitive.

Stay close to technology change

AI, automation, regulatory information management, structured content and data-driven submissions are fast becoming a staple expectation. Candidates who can demonstrate real technology fluency will stand out and, increasingly, those who cannot will be noticed too.



10.

OUTLOOK BEYOND 2026

The Regulatory Affairs hiring market will remain both selective and competitive. Employers are becoming more disciplined about who they hire, yet demand for genuinely experienced regulatory leaders shows no sign of easing.

The highest-value candidates will be those who pair technical credibility with commercial awareness, international fluency and the ability to lead through change. Professionals who can shape global strategy and manage agency complexity will stay in short supply and will keep commanding premium compensation.

For employers, the challenge will lie in securing leaders who can help the organization move faster while protecting patients, products and reputation.

For candidates, the opportunity lies in proving that Regulatory Affairs is not a brake on the business, but an engine for responsible growth.

Key takeaways

- Regulatory Affairs roles are becoming more strategic, more global and more commercially influential.
- Dual-functional QARA leaders are in high demand, but genuine dual-domain talent is scarce.
- Regulatory Affairs hiring is strongest for global strategy, agency-facing, CMC, device, biologics and advanced therapy expertise.
- The US and Switzerland remain the highest-paying markets, while Germany, the UK, Spain and Japan each have distinct local hiring dynamics.
- Candidates want clear mandates, executive access, realistic resources, flexibility and competitive compensation.
- Employers who benchmark early, move quickly and stay transparent about the scale of the challenge will win the best people.



TALENT INTELLIGENCE

At Leonid, we hire across all areas of corporate governance, including legal, privacy, compliance, ESG, risk & audit. All of our global hiring guides for these sectors can be found here on our website.

Talent Intelligence: your secret weapon in hiring, retaining and future-proofing your team

Beyond search-based hiring, Leonid Group is a talent advisory business. Our consulting arm brings proprietary data and insight to help teams optimize their organisational design and build a robust business case for change; for example, unlocking budget for additional hires

If you would like to find out more about our Talent Intelligence service and book a FREE 'lite' presentation on your firm's attrition vs competitors, talent flow and an overview of what candidates in your industry really want — please contact Adam Bond to book a no-obligation meeting.



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