

Seventy-Five Percent of Public Employers Plan to Hire for New Positions in 2007

The third annual public sector hiring outlook survey revealed that public agencies plan to do quite a bit of hiring in fiscal year 2007. Seventy-five percent of survey respondents indicated they plan to hire for new positions this year. Most of those positions will be in public safety, public works, and finance and management.

The hiring outlook is more positive than 2006, and nearly equal to 2005. In 2006, 68 percent of respondents planned to hire for new positions during the year and in 2005, that number was equivalent to 2007, when 75 percent of respondents indicated they plan to increase the size of the workforce.

One difference is that this year it appears that employers who are planning to hire are planning to fill a greater number of jobs. In 2007, 41 percent of respondents said the number of positions would represent less than one percent of their total workforce. In 2006, that figure was 60 percent and in 2005, it was two-thirds of respondents. Thirty-six percent of respondents this year said the number of positions represented between one and three percent of their total workforce, in 2006, that figure was 25 percent and in 2005, it was 20 percent. Also in 2007, nearly 12 percent of respondents said the number of positions to be filled represent between three and five percent of their workforce and 11 percent said it would be more than 5 percent of their workforce.

As in past years, the most number of new positions will be in public safety. In 2007, 50 percent of respondents indicated plans to hire in public safety; in 2006 and 2005 that number was 41 and 31 percent respectively. In 2007, 34 percent of respondents indicated plans to hire in public works, in 2006 that figure was 24 percent. The other top area for hiring was finance and management – and this was also in the third slot in 2006. In 2007, 26 percent of respondents indicated plans to hire in this area and in 2006 that number was 19 percent. In 2005, more people indicated plans to hire in parks and recreation than in finance. In 2007, 21 percent of respondents indicated plans to hire in parks and recreation. (The numbers are greater than 100 percent because agencies could choose more than one area where they anticipated hiring.)

When asked about lay-offs only 12 percent of respondents indicated plans to conduct lay-offs in 2007. This number is down from 2006 and 2005 when 16 and 18 percent of respondents, respectively, planned layoffs. And again in past years, the number of positions eliminated will represent a very small portion of the workforce.

In 2007, 72 percent of respondents who indicated they plan to lay-off workers said that the number of positions eliminated would represent less than one percent of the current workforce. In 2006 that number was 84 percent of respondents and in 2005 it was 60 percent. Twenty-one percent of respondents to the 2007 survey said that the number of positions eliminated represent between one and three percent of the current workforce. Those numbers are also similar to prior years.

Survey respondents were also asked if they have any vacancies and 89 percent indicated they do, with 28 percent saying the number of vacancies represents less than one percent of their current workforce, 24 percent said it was between one and two percent of their current workforce and 14 percent said it was between two and three percent of their current workforce. One hundred and six organizations said they have vacancies that represent more than 5 percent of their current workforce.

Those that have vacancies were asked if the positions were purposefully left unfilled for budgetary reasons and 32 percent yes, in 2006 that number was 39 percent.

The 2007 Hiring Outlook Survey was conducted between January 10, 2007 and January 17, 2007. The survey was sent by email to all IPMA-HR members and 656 people responded.