

Five hundred and eighty people completed the Fifth Annual Public Sector Employment Outlook Survey and given the recent economic downturn, we expected the survey results to be vastly different than in past years and in some respects it was. The number of public agencies planning to hire this year dropped significantly as the number of agencies planning layoffs jumped dramatically. Also appreciably higher is the number of agencies leaving vacancies unfilled for budget reasons.

The good news is that slightly more than half of respondents are still planning to hire for new positions in 2009 (52%). This is down from past years when nearly three-quarters of respondents planned to hire for new positions. (73% in 2008, 75% in 2007, 68% in 2006 and 75% in 2005).

As in past years, the number of jobs expected to be created are a small percentage of the overall workforce. Thirty-seven percent of respondents said that it would be less than one percent of the workforce, 21 percent said between one and three percent of the workforce and four percent said between three and five percent of the workforce. Two percent said more than 5 but less than 10 percent of the workforce and only 1 percent said more than ten percent of the workforce. Overall, these numbers are lower this year than last with more respondents indicating that their hiring would represent a smaller percentage of their workforce.

As in the past, the number-one area for hiring is public safety with 38 percent of respondents anticipating hiring for new positions in this area, followed by public works (23%) and parks and recreation (11%) and HR (8%) tied with health services.

By comparison, in 2008, 45 percent of respondents said they anticipate hiring in public safety, thirty percent in public works and 24 percent in finance management, 17 percent in parks and recreation and 15% in HR.

More than double the number of respondents indicated that they plan lay-offs this year compared to last year. This year 30 percent of respondents plan layoffs, in 2008 that number was 12 percent and in past years, the number was similar – 12 percent in 2007, 16 percent in 2006, and 18 percent in 2005.

And, those layoffs will represent a larger percentage of the workforce than in the past, this year 5 percent of respondents said the layoff would represent between five and 10 percent of the workforce, by comparison only 1.4 percent responded in a similar manner in 2008 and 2.2 percent said the layoff would constitute more than 10 percent of their workforce and less than one percent responded similarly in 2008.

Twelve percent of respondents said the layoff would represent less than one percent of the workforce and the same number said between one and two percent of the workforce. In 2008 those numbers were 11 percent and 5 percent respectively.

Layoffs are expected in public works (15%), parks and recreation (13%), finance/management (excluding HR) (13%), public safety (10%), HR (9%), and health services (7%).

Another change from past years is the number of respondents who indicated they are purposefully keeping vacancies unfilled for budgetary reasons – 67 percent – indicated they are doing so compared to 31 percent in 2008, 32 percent in 2007 and 39 percent in 2006.

Of those with vacancies, most respondents indicated they represent a small percentage of the workforce – less than one percent (28%), between 1-2 percent (23%), between 2-3 percent (10%), between 3-4 percent (6%), between 4-5 percent (7%), between 5-10 percent (12%) and more than 10 percent (5%).