Making Public Works an Attractive Option in a Changing Workplace

Public Works Officers Institute
Universal City Hilton
March 9, 2023
Welcome

• Introductions
• Overview of session
  • Priming the pump – Background & context
  • Panel Presentations
  • Q&A – Panel Interaction
Why is this Topic Important?
Workplace looks different

Remote Worker Penetration of Total Employees by Country

Labor Force has Changed

- Government and Utilities still below pre pandemic levels

Great Resignation Lingers

**Quits**

- Exceeded pre-pandemic
- 21 consecutive months

**>4M American/month**

- Voluntarily left job
- 18 straight months

Job Market is Volatile

10.5M Job Openings

6.0M Unemployed

>1.7 position = 1 job seeker

Struggle to Fill Public Works Jobs

If you were to leave your current role, what do you anticipate would be the primary reason?

[Pie charts showing reasons for leaving current role, with the reason for retirement highlighted]

Fig. 6: Some 35% of veteran engineers expect to leave their jobs for retirement. Source: IEEE Globalspec.
Table 1.11 Employment in STEM occupations, 2021 and projected 2031
(Numbers in thousands)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total, all occupations</td>
<td>158,134.7</td>
<td>166,452.1</td>
<td>8,317.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>$45,760</td>
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<td>STEM occupations(2)</td>
<td>9,880.2</td>
<td>10,944.2</td>
<td>1,064.0</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>$95,420</td>
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<td>Non-STEM occupations</td>
<td>148,254.5</td>
<td>155,508.0</td>
<td>7,253.5</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>$40,120</td>
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Footnotes:
(1) Data are from the Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics program, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Wage data cover non-farm wage and salary workers and do not cover the self-employed, owners and partners in unincorporated firms, or household workers.
(2) Science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) occupations include computer and mathematical, architecture and engineering, and life and physical science occupations, as well as managerial and postsecondary teaching occupations related to these functional areas and sales occupations requiring scientific or technical knowledge at the postsecondary level. For more information, see https://www.bls.gov/oes/topics.htm#stem.


Last Modified Date: September 8, 2022
State of California IIJA By the Numbers

JOBS CREATED

Jobs created are assessed based on 13,000 jobs per $1B invested. For more information on the employment impacts of highway infrastructure, visit the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) page on this topic.

Number of Jobs Created

17,386
What do we do?

- Retain talent
- Recruit in competitive markets
- Inspire the next generation
More Competitive Compensation

Public Works
• Civil Engineer = $95k
• Env Engineer = $93k
• Urban Planner = $75k
• Env Scientist = $72k

Tech and Finance
• Software Eng/Architect = $149
• Cyber Security = $135k
• Computer Scientist = $110k
• Financial Advisor = $105k
• Investment Banker = $110k

Indeed Salary Estimator
Recruiting – Be More Creative
Inspiring the Next Generation
Panel Presentations

Walter = Speed of hiring

Josh = Retaining talent

Paul = A student's perspective
Speed of Hiring
Speed of Hiring

- Communicate the importance of hiring quickly
  - Competition
  - Good candidates don’t wait
  - High priority
- Avoid excuses and offer to take the lead
  - Public process/HR
  - Take the lead

- Set aggressive timelines
  - Draft bulletin – one business day
  - Eligibility review – one-two business days
  - Applications received from HR – review one-two business days
  - Screening calls – ASAP (one business day)
  - Virtual interviews – within 2-5 business days
  - 2nd interview – within 2-3 business days (virtual)
  - Meet and greet – within 5 business days (offer letter ready)
  - Total process after applications received – 10-15 business days
Speed of Hiring

- Other tips
  - Don’t forget to coordinate with IT early on
  - Panel selection is very important
  - Hire people not resumes
Retaining Employees
Challenges with Employee Retention

• We are losing the battle for talent
• More important than ever to keep the employees we already have
• Current challenges we face in the public sector:
  • Public employees are – on average – older than their private sector counterparts
  • COVID has accelerated employees leaving the public sector
  • Turnover can undermine service and increase workload and stress on the remaining workforce
• Are we doomed?????
Factors Important to Employees to Stay

• Each organization is different – consider an employee survey
• A meta-analysis conducted by Route Fifty led to the following conclusions on public sector employers:
  • Exhaustion is the largest factor impacting turnover
  • Participation in decision-making, fair processes, and supervisor support play a medium role in turnover
  • Pay and rewards play a small role in turnover
• A recent article in PM Magazine suggests that most employees prioritize “flexibility, well-being, and purpose-driven work”
• This is great news and suggests a path to retain employees and attract new employees
Potential Measures – Flexibility and Well-Being

• Support work schedules that promote work/life balance:
  • Flexible work schedules (9/80, 4/10, work hours, etc.)
  • Remote work opportunities
  • Alternative work arrangements (part-time, flexible day-to-day work, caregiving needs)

• Encourage the use of available leave balances
• Celebrate and recognize employee success
• Employee communication
• Support investments in technology and resources
• Encourage leadership to be accessible to your employees
Potential Measures – Purpose-Driven Work

- Establish a department strategic plan to outline the greater mission and vision
- Consider adopting a workforce development and succession plan
- Invest in employee training and certification programs
- Encourage a performance evaluation process that focuses on employee development
- Fostering an inclusive workplace culture where employees are engaged and empowered
A Student’s Perspective
Many students have chosen the college major of civil engineering with an innate desire to have a positive effect on society.

Are there opportunities for public agencies to further shape their recruitments and messaging around the value of civil service and positive influence on their citizenry?

Are there opportunities for the private sector, where a significant portion of their client base are public agencies, to do the same in communicating how their companies provide a positive and worthwhile contribution?

Are there opportunities for the universities, perhaps even high schools, to highlight the many benefits of a career in public works?

Let’s find sustainable and enduring ways in which public agencies, private firms, and universities can convey a positive and consistent message to the next generation of public works employees.
Questions for Audience

• What is the greatest work force challenge you face today?
• What successes or failures have you experienced with:
  • Retaining Employees?
  • Hiring Process?
  • Engaging Students?
• How does Public Works “Start with Why”
• What themes or topics would you like to see PWOI address in the future?