

## 2019 MJC Staffing Survey

The purpose of this survey was to obtain feedback on 1) innovative ways to retain staff, 2) how the challenge of finding qualified mid- to senior level staff is being addressed, and 3) how jurisdictions are using third party firms to provide jurisdictional services. Many jurisdictions are starting to rely more on third party firms to assist them with permitting, plans review, engineering, and inspection services as well as self-certification programs. Some are also developing in-house training programs, innovative recruiting techniques and compensation packages to help relieve staffing concerns. These survey results will help better understand and develop ways to assist jurisdictions' approaches to these issues.

ICC has already taken a major step to assist the jurisdictions with addressing some of these issues with their Safety 2.0 program. Safety 2.0 is the International Code Council's signature initiative to welcome a new generation of members and leaders to the building safety profession: <https://www.iccsafe.org/about-icc/safety2> This program is a great resource and has multiple initiatives to help local jurisdictions deal with various issues ranging from education, recruiting, career pathing to leadership and more. Take the time to explore Safety 2.0 and all that it offers!

Below are the twelve survey questions and responses:

### **Q1 Please define the steps taken by your jurisdiction to retain existing staff.**

1. Occasional raises. We pay for training and current certifications, leading to career advancement opportunities. The benefits are a plus in a place where a lot of employers can't compete.
2. Training and advancement possibilities.
3. Continuing to evaluate/update salaries with HR for the market conditions. Provide excellent benefits package. Support for continued professional development. Payout bonuses two times a year.
4. Set up a contingency for future slowdown in economy.
5. Offer competitive pay and benefits package. Invest in professional development and training. Give adequate attention to employees' work-spaces and general environment.
6. All internal programs designed to motivate, develop, and encourage staff to remain and promote within our Development Service Department.
7. We are now re-evaluating market studies with in the industry to see how we compare with key positions; encouraging strategic thinking, collaborative relationship building, values and integrity as building blocks as platforms for the department moving forward.
8. Retirements are difficult to retain. We found, as the research shows, that people quit the boss not the job so we have been working on culture and mentoring supervisors to address this.
9. Introduction of career path for Plans Examiners. Improvements to career path for Inspectors underway. Focus on Improving supervisor and manager skills to create better and more collaborative bosses. Salary increases. Increase in training and certification budget.
10. Retention of good staff is very difficult. Staff stay with an organization if they are aspired, learning, and improving themselves these days. Promote staff taking their own initiative.
11. Provide training (technical and management), opportunities for growth for exemplary employees.
12. Minimal effort to retain existing staff. We have a high turnover rate. Wages are low – benefit packages get reduced over time, and cannot compete with private sector.
13. We looked at the benefits and try to have as good if not better ones. We also have done pay studies and increased wages across the board on some job titles.

14. Training and Certification Support; Providing Opportunities for Decisions; Entrusting Team Members; Recognition before one's peers in bi-monthly staff meetings.
15. Career Development programs, spot bonuses, involvement in state and national organizations/associations.
16. Provide good benefits such as health, paid tuitions for higher education or continuing education/certification. Be competitive in salary for each disciplines.
17. This is a state wide issue, with low unemployment rate it is difficult to hire and retain staff, long term solution is to raise the salaries of professional staff.
18. Develop internal culture that is conducive to high morale. Enable pay equity. Ensure upward mobility options.
19. Continuous training and boosting morale.
20. N/A
21. For over ten years, we have used certification pay to compensate staff for passing ICC exams. Eligible staff can earn incentive pay. Growth plans for meeting specific requirements, including passing of ICC exams that allows an employee to promote from one position to the next.

In summation, our department encourages upward mobility, offers an exceptional benefits package, and regular performance based raises.

## **Q2 How is your jurisdiction attracting new staff, especially at the mid- and senior-level staff?**

1. It is very difficult to do with budget limitations. We have trouble with attracting the entry level inspector.
2. Benefit packages and competitive pay.
3. Enhanced advertising. Sometimes hiring bonuses or extra vacation can be included in the hiring package.
4. Provide good salary and promotion opportunity programs.
5. We also have a robust social media presence and use it in part for outreach to potential job-seekers, as well as local, well-known, publications. Our state certification commission offers on their web site a job board for any agency that desires to advertise a job opening.
6. City Human Resource website.
7. We have been using escalated training programs for all key talent search's to prepare them for leadership roles. Some of the challenges we are having is the budget from year to year.
8. First, we try to grow them from the inside the department and within the city. Due to the climate and location we have more new staff interest than most probably.
9. Increased salary. More active recruitment. New job family and career path for Plans Examiners.
10. The City Manager Office is trying to stream line the hiring process through other departments. To attract senior-level staff outside recruiters are utilized. Salaries paid by our jurisdiction is lower than similar size agencies and that does not help attracting high end management or senior staff.
11. Displays in public areas of our buildings highlighting positions for target audience, publish ads in various media, and civil service list calls.
12. Through public advertising and in house postings. There are no real incentives – the pension packages are gone, wages are very low.
13. We are reaching to the younger staff members and posting jobs on many places and sharing with the local unions.
14. Supporting ongoing professional development with allowances for continuing education, in addition to supporting active participation in the Virginia Building and Code Officials Association.
15. Hire from within utilizing mentorship, training, opportunities...reputation of department working environment

16. Providing competitive benefits, and make them part of the team in our system.
17. We are looking for more long term, and are pursuing hiring at the entry level positions and then working on retaining these individuals.
18. Creating programs to develop lower level staff into mid and senior managers. If recruiting from outside the organization, ensuring job ads are on web forums, and by even holding job fairs.
19. In general the mid- and senior-level employees are selected by promotional interviews from the internal staff.
20. N/A
21. We reach out to State agencies to identify mailing lists to attract new staff (for example, for a targeted mailout to licensed plumbers). We also advertise job openings through our Development Insight newsletter that is distributed to the development community.

Our jurisdiction is attracting new staff through utilizing high-traffic publications, social media, and local forums to advertise the incentives of a career in our department. This is a challenge for mid- and senior-level staff due to the volume of work in the area.

**Q3 How are you reaching out to newcomers to bring them into our industry? Are you reaching out to high schools, colleges, trades, military and/or other?**

1. We give training at various venues. Another way is to send our contractor applicants to iccsafe.org and find the tests, look at the education availability and certifications. Also, when a contractor renewal applicant appears we send them there to seek on-line CEU's as an option.
2. N/A but need to do more
3. Some inspectors teach classes at local colleges. Sometimes speak at trade/technical high school.
4. We reach out by consultants and social media
5. We participate from time to time in job fairs, usually directed at the community college / trade school level
6. Our department holds speaking sessions with high school students and trade schools.
7. Yes. We continue to do this. As you know these are entry positions. So, they are more of backfill of positions as we promote staff to higher positions within the organization.
8. Yes, reaching out to all mentioned. Also, have policies to allow ride along for inspection and student programs to experience work in the city and get to know the staff.
9. Our City has mentoring programs with high schools and colleges. We notify industry partner organizations of vacancies.
10. As a building official, I do teach and try to attract interested parties to our industry. As a City, we just started a volunteer program for people who are interested to work at the Building and Safety Dept.
11. Established mentoring program, DOB's professional Speaker Series at local universities, internships for local university students, outreach to trade unions and other similar organizations.
12. Bringing new comers in has not been a priority, existing staff are aging and retiring, no one is being brought in to carry on.
13. All of the above, along with sharing jobs across the city, an example would be to look at a parks worker and see what they have for skills and see if you can offer them an intern position. The State has a paid intern program going from a jobs bill grant.
14. Fully supporting public outreach with HSTTP, increasing public awareness of opportunities through Building Safety Month Events.
15. Tech schools , high schools
16. We tried and did not have any positive results.

17. We are exploring and using internships with the university and community colleges which are proving to be successful.
18. Yes. We have developed a co-op program to recruit high school tech grads and apprentices for inspectors and a similar program for college grads in plan review and engineering positions.
19. Campus interviews, and if time/resources allow- job fairs.
20. Social Media.
21. For years, our department director has participated in promoting our employment opportunities at local public schools by participating in “career days”. For the past few years, we have also hosted a Junior Achievement Shadow Day to help introduce our work at youth in a local high school program who construct “tiny homes”. The process includes plan review, permitting and inspections, to include addressing of issues through the process.

Apprenticeship programs are periodically used to recruit from high schools, colleges, trades, and military for our department’s operation training. The local ICC chapter is involved in industry outreach as well.

**Q4 Does your jurisdiction have a civil service recruitment process? If so, how does that impact your staffing needs?**

1. We are required to interview military applicants. It doesn’t affect staffing. Many times the military applicants built bombs, worked on aircraft or ground support, and admit they know nothing about construction or municipal inspection.
2. Yes impact is positive.
3. Respondent skipped this question.
4. Yes, we have civil service and take more time to recruit staff.
5. As a county agency we do not have a civil service recruitment process.
6. Not that I am aware of.
7. No we do not have this.
8. Yes. Sometimes it gets in the way of getting qualified staff. I have had HR provide shoes sales experience for counter/permit tech positions.
9. No.
10. Yes we do. Civil service slows down recruitment and has a different focus. Their focus is affirmative action versus our focus is to bring qualified individuals on board. These two objectives normally do not match and result in bringing in lesser qualified or technical staff in to the Building Department.
11. Yes, civil service provides a mixed bag in meeting staffing needs. The benefits is access to hundreds of candidates that are prequalified with licensing and experience requirements. The drawback is that many of the private sector design professionals are not aware of civil service titles and are not within the pool of candidates.
12. To my knowledge no, our recruitment is limited and those who come on board stay only a short time and or until something better comes along.
13. Yes, we follow the rules if the person is qualified to do the job we will hire them and review them over the one year before they are hired full time.
14. Not that I am aware of. We advertise positions on our website: through local news publications; on industry related websites; and ICC’S website.
15. No

16. Our HR has very systematic job descriptions for each position in collaboration with each department manager. They try to find the best qualified candidates that fit each job description by processing the job applications and their resumes.
17. Yes, it is difficult or hire under this process due to the lengthiness of the approvals necessary to hire employees.
18. Yes it does. It significantly slows the recruitment process and impedes choosing the best candidate for technical and bureaucratic reasons.
19. Yes, it does. Setting up interviews and making selections through the civil service recruitment process takes longer time. In some cases, by the time the job offer is made, the candidates are hired by someone else.
20. I'm not sure.
21. Respondent skipped this question.

The required courtesy interviews add time to the recruitment process, but do not affect quality of staff that is eventually recruited.

**Q5 Are you currently, or do you plan to, contract with third-party firms to provide jurisdictional services? If yes, why?**

1. No, not typically.
2. Yes we do for plan review, gets them out of the door faster we use this to handle overflow so we don't have to hire FTE's.
3. Not at this time.
4. No, union rules.
5. At this time we are considering only one significant third-party service, specifically, to provide tracking of fire protection system inspection, testing, and maintenance.
6. Not to my knowledge.
7. We have this program in place.
8. Yes. Due to the high cost of retirement benefits we have slowed staffing process to address increased volumes that we are experiencing. This will probably increase for many years to come.
9. We currently contract for 1 plan review service and we allow 3<sup>rd</sup> party inspections to be submitted for specific inspections. The amount of work we have exceeds the capacity of staffing approved by City Council. The use of third party services during an economic boom decreases the need for reduction in force when there is an economic downturn.
10. We are currently using 3<sup>rd</sup> party consultants on plan check, inspection, and permit center. Due to staff departures, retirements, sick time we have to utilize 3<sup>rd</sup>-party consultants. Additionally, it takes time for us to train the 3<sup>rd</sup> party staff with our jurisdiction ordinances and resources before they become productive.
11. No.
12. It has been considered, but there can be union issues when doing so. There are times when we accept reports and third party inspections – but only at the cost of the applicant.
13. No
14. We are currently under contract with an accredited TP engineering firm to augment plan review and inspection services, should we have a need for additional support.
15. Absolutely not.
16. No, because I heard some adjacent building departments did not have a good feeling from the work done outside firms to provide proper inspections per their standards.

17. Yes and no, Honolulu does not hire third party firms directly (due to our complex contract procurement regulations and the lack of available firms due to conflict of interests) Honolulu uses a certification process whereby third party firms hired by private entities are accepted in lieu of staff review.
18. Yes. To supplement staff in boom times so as not to lay off staff in lean times, and to provide specific services with distinct and niche technical expertise, e.g., elevator inspections.
19. No.
20. No.
21. No, we are not pursuing third party firm for any work. We did notice an increase in the number of residential plans being submitted but, through our budget process, we were able to obtain additional plan reviewer positions to address the increase. In San Antonio, Development Services is an enterprise fund (not general fund) which gives us flexibility to increase staffing based demand

We utilize third-party firms for plans check for short periods of increased workload.

**Q6 What areas of your department do you plan to contract out to third-party firms in the future (permitting/plans review/engineering/inspections)?**

1. We have a very large city job in the near future. There has been talk that to avert arguments between staff and the contractors/architects and hire third party to do the plan review and the inspections or at least a lot of the inspections.
2. Looking into some inspections.
3. N/A
4. None
5. See the answer to question 5.
6. We contract temporary administrative assistance with a temporary agency and at times have contracted fire alarm and fire sprinkler plan review.
7. Plan review and inspections when requested.
8. We use and will continue to use 3rd party firms for customer service/permit tech, plan review both on site and off and inspection services.
9. May change inspections from having the customer hire the third-party firm to our department hiring the third-party firm to provide better oversight.
10. Permit Center, Plan check, and Inspection services.
11. No
12. Inspections and testing reports when necessary.
13. None
14. Typically reserved for plan review and field inspections of new construction only.
15. Absolutely nothing..... third parties typically have no real legal accountability
16. Only in specific projects which would be so complicated that need special design talent and experience to review and inspect the unique projects.
17. More inspections.
18. Currently third party firms, hired by the county, conduct plan review services and elevator inspections. Building owners are permitted to hire third party inspection services (not associated with special inspections) with county permission.
19. Records processing, Software maintenance
20. N/A
21. None.

Third-party contracts are reserved for specific circumstances, usually related to workload in plan review.

**Q7 When contracting with a third party, what qualifications do you look for before selecting a firm?**

1. We haven't selected a third party in recent times.
2. ICC Cert
3. N/A
4. N/A
5. Reputation in the industry, support, reliability of the platform, ease of use, and cost.
6. Professional Engineer in fire protection systems.
7. For a firm to qualify to perform duties they must meeting the North Carolina State Fire Marshal's requirements for code officials. They we do a profile check on the projects to verify work they have performed. Lastly, would be how they would work with in culture in meeting customer expectations.
8. Level of experience and level of customer service skills are the top issues.
9. Experience in cities of a similar size, similar project types to what we see now, staff with relevant certifications including architects and engineers, years of relevant experience.
10. We go through an RFP process every 3-4years and qualify the third party consultants.
11. N/A
12. They must meet those minimum qualifications as described within the code(s)
13. N/A
14. Qualifications, Related Experience, Quality Assurance Procedures.
15. See above
16. Be registered design professional depending on the nature of the project coupled with proper certification from ICC or any qualified agency for review and inspection.
17. National certifications whenever possible.
18. We must work with our purchasing department to launch an RFP and conduct a long process to contract with a third party entity.
19. Experience in handling projects of the same scope and size. Flexibility for making changes in their services based on our needs.
20. Respondent skipped this question.
21. N/A

When we do contract to a third-party, we look for qualifications that reflect those of our full time employees, the firm's reputation in the industry, and professional expertise in the areas they will be utilized.

**Q8 What challenges have you faced using third-party firms such as quality issues or work delivery times, etc.?**

1. Our issues with third parties when we did hire third parties, was the plan reviews missed blatant errors, as well as at inspections in the field.
2. QC
3. N/A
4. N/A
5. As of yet we have not had enough experience with third-party firms to give a good answer to the question.
6. N/A

7. All of the above. That is why filtering must be in place to review work performance and delivery methodology.
8. Some are much better than others. Not all are quality and only looking at how to make money. We found that we needed to meet with each and lay out the baseline and provide our comment lists for them to use for uniformity.
9. The inability to easily interface our computer systems (challenge on both sides), quantity of work issues particularly if the firm is experiencing staff vacancies, onboarding and training in local processes and amendments, staff hesitancy and distrust in an outside vendor as well as staff concern about job security (i.e. will the vendor replace them).
10. 3<sup>rd</sup> party staff shall be very qualified and experienced to work in our agency due to complexities of a large City.
11. N/A
12. Most often and with larger projects – a firm is already on board. Most challenges are when we become overwhelmed due to being shorthanded.
13. No control of what you get for an inspector, the reports vary too much, some detailed the next is so vague.
14. Time associated with management of TP firms, receiving timely inspection information, quality assurance follow up, verbal communications.
15. See prior answer
16. The short one we had they fulfilled our expectation regarding the quality and done in timely manners.
17. Quality of work.
18. Third party plan reviewers have not conducted as thorough a review as in-house staff. County-hired elevator inspections contractor has had issues with requiring field corrections that are not based on code.
19. Most of the third party firms have no experience in dealing with the size and range of the tasks we handle. Also, Conflict of interest- some third party plan review companies offer design services as well. Some inspection companies offer construction services.
20. Skipped
21. N/A

Quality has become an issue in the past surrounding third-party firms, which is why we have strayed away from using them regularly.

**Q9 How do you assign work to third party firms that allows you to both manage your workload but also provides enough work to the third party firm to keep them interested?**

1. We don't hire any currently.
2. Would have to be a contract approved by council
3. N/A
4. N/A
5. Not applicable
6. N/A
7. Respondent skipped this question.
8. With all the volume that we have we do not have an issue keeping multiple consultants busy and sometimes very busy. Many times we find the expertise of the consultant and use them for those types of projects.
9. We send a specific type of plan review to them that keeps it separate from the rest our review work. We also send additional projects to clear backlogs during staff vacancies.



10. We generally do not send plan check out. We bring the consultant staff in and over see their work. We engage with outside consultant to bring our back log work down and that is normally enough work to keep a consultant interested.
11. N/A
12. Only when needed- and the 3rd party is never contracted through Dover, the applicant is able to provide 3rd party inspections/reports but only when previously approved to do so.
13. N/A
14. We typically reserve multifaceted, complex construction projects for the vast majority of the work we permit TP on. Otherwise it is a “specialty niche” where a TP has expertise/equipment that we either don’t have time or experienced staff, in order to conduct inspections.
15. See prior response.
16. We do third party on case by cases as we need when we are so busy or need additional help in regards to technicality of the project.
17. We don’t it is the option of the applicant to do so.
18. Plan review firms are only fed projects that when county staff is overwhelmed. The current firm is a non-profit (IBTS), so they tend to be always interested.
19. We don’t. Most of the third party firms have no experience in dealing with the size and range of tasks we handle
20. Respondent skipped this question.
21. N/A

Third-parties do not usually contract with us directly, when needed, the department oversees and assesses the work being done by them.

**Q10 Looking to the future, do you believe outsourcing jurisdictional services to third-party firms is in the best interest of the Jurisdiction OR Building Department Customers?**

1. Jurisdiction
2. Building Department Customers
3. Jurisdiction
4. Jurisdiction
5. Jurisdiction
6. Building Department Customers
7. Jurisdiction
8. Building Department Customers
9. Building Department Customers
10. Building Department Customers
11. Skipped
12. Building Department Customers
13. Jurisdiction
14. Jurisdiction
15. Skipped
16. Building Department Customers
17. Jurisdiction
18. Skipped
19. Skipped

20. Skipped

21. Skipped

Reponses are divided between the two options. Those who skipped, noted in the additional comments that they believed the use of third-party firms was in the interest of both or neither.

**Q11 How do you envision building departments being run differently 10 years from now?**

1. We may not even be a City department in 10 years. The Managers/Council already purchased a Priority Based Budget software setup to identify programs that should be cut or to remain.
2. I don't know.
3. More high tech/electronic. More 4d technology. More special inspections or contract work.
4. More e-plan check and less customers coming in to the department in person.
5. Document submittals will continue to transition from paper to electronic format. AHJ's will rely more on third-party inspection services for final inspection services for final inspections.
6. Electronic permit and plan review submittals will be prominent. More focus on combination plan review and inspection experts.
7. I think you will states more use of Permit HUB approach to permitting, plan review and inspections. I think you will have more regional offices instead of AHJ offices. This pool their monies and help build consistency between them and lure business to their states.
8. AI software being developed to do plan check like is done now with structural design software. There will be a huge loss of experience in our industry in the next 10 years. Citizens will expect immediate access to everything on this personal devices.
9. We are seeing a trend toward more collaborative processes between the customers and staff during both plan review and inspections. Customers expect more education and more interaction, improved customer service. Since our City is experiencing a boom, our customers are less and less experienced requiring more education from the building department.
10. Nowadays new technologies allow working remotely. Digital code libraries will be a part of our work in the next 10 years. Combing the two above bring efficiency and cost saving as well as faster turnaround, leading to becoming less bureaucratic and more privatized.
11. More reliance on software for plan review.
12. I believe that Public Services will become a thing of the past and will be privatized.
13. More remote working, 3D BIM modeling, more photos or videos of the inspections.
14. More efficient and clearly written TP programs where information is transferred electronically. Utilization of TP where the need clearly exists will foster better use of these services.
15. I don't see any changes other than technological improvements.
16. I believe it will be more online and using digital devices and usage of qualified outside firm to do review or inspection with collaboration with local jurisdiction departments.
17. More private partnership relationship.
18. Building departments will deliver most services virtually and with limited a footprint. We envision some inspections conducted using smartphone and drone technology.
19. Use of latest technology for plan review and inspection. However, this should be monitored and bone by the building department, not by the third party.
20. N/A

21. We have already started the transition to conducting more of our operations through electronic means. We have a large IT project that will also allow for transparency and processing of plans, permits and inspections through a portal.

Departments will have an increase in the need for technically skilled employees due to the industry becoming more reliant on technology, increase in the lack of field experienced employees, and increased security efforts.

## **Q12 Other comments?**

1. Fortunately we are a very small community. To go private would cause a lot of backlash from the citizens and taxpayers. Especially for things such as garbage and landfill. I don't believe that the citizens would agree to having the private inspector cost double the city rates and have inspections delayed by days.
2. N/A
3. Respondent skipped this question.
4. None
5. Respondent skipped this question
6. I hope that someday Accredited Developmental Service departments are required to make their community contractors be certified through ICC.
7. Respondent skipped this question.
8. I think the answer for #10 is both really.
9. Respondent skipped this question.
10. Thank you for sending out this survey.
11. Respondent skipped this question.
12. There are good and bad associated with both private and public sectors. Regardless there must be some legal measures to ensure that qualified and ethical people perform those building regulation responsibilities. If not – our built environment will quite literally begin to crumble....
13. Thank You
14. Timely survey/conversation that needs to be better understood by both jurisdictions as well as private companies wishing to participate in the code compliance industry. VBCOA supports the member through providing professional development, training and networking opportunities. Leadership, mentorship and volunteering to promote safe structures throughout the common wealth requires teamwork. We emphasize the need, the opportunities for those that want to work hard in a diverse atmosphere to improve the industry we have chosen to serve. Thank You...PM
15. Respondent skipped this question.
16. We need to train more young candidates and train them in some intensive education and hands on experience (field inspection) and make them ready to have a minimum qualification to start as a building inspector and they can enter this industry without and hesitation and show them clear path for their growth.
17. Respondent skipped this question.
18. My answer to #10 would be neither.
19. Answer to question 10 is neither.
20. Respondent skipped this question.
21. Respondent skipped this question.

Measures to increase competency of individuals in the construction industry need to be taken by increasing the amount of certified individuals.