Workload, Staff Size, and the Challenges of Recruitment

Findings from the Reed College Elections & Voting Information Center
2023 Survey of Local Election Officials

Paul Manson, PhD | Paul Gronke, PhD
February 2024
The Size Principle
The “75:8” Problem

- **Vast disparities** in the size of the service populations between differently sized jurisdictions.
- **The differences are reflected in most other metrics:** budgets, staff sizes, and other resources.
Disparities in Staffing: No Wiggle Room for Most LEOs

- **Smaller** jurisdictions may have no full-time staff, particularly in those with less than 5,000 voter.
- **Larger** jurisdictions are likely to have more than 10 staff members including the LEO.
- **Medium-sized** jurisdictions manage with fewer than 6 staff members.
Expanding Workloads
Maximum Hours Worked During Peak Periods

- Hours worked peak during elections, **exceeding 40 hours** a week for many offices.
- These peak hours are worked for 4-5 weeks per election.
- Small offices, **often without full-time staff**, see 525% rise in the hours needed to administer elections.
- These **small offices have many other duties** and responsibilities that cannot be delayed.
Changes in Workload by Task

- Across many election tasks, **more time is required** to accomplish tasks than 4 years ago.
- **Challenges in workload vary by size of election office:** smaller offices finding core election tasks more time consuming.
- **Public record requests, citizen complaints and media requests** are a greater
Changes Most Pronounced in Larger Jurisdictions

- Public Records Requests: 90% (65% A lot more time than 4 years ago, 36% More time than 4 years ago)
- Preparing for pre-Election Day voting: 73% (33% A lot more time than 4 years ago, 36% More time than 4 years ago)
- Preparing for Election Day voting: 73% (33% A lot more time than 4 years ago, 36% More time than 4 years ago)
- Citizen complaints: 70% (33% A lot more time than 4 years ago, 36% More time than 4 years ago)
- Media requests: 67% (26% A lot more time than 4 years ago, 36% More time than 4 years ago)
- Post-election audits: 64% (27% A lot more time than 4 years ago, 36% More time than 4 years ago)
- Ballot curing: 55% (20% A lot more time than 4 years ago, 36% More time than 4 years ago)
- Voter registration: 48% (13% A lot more time than 4 years ago, 36% More time than 4 years ago)
- Signature matching: 36% (14% A lot more time than 4 years ago, 36% More time than 4 years ago)
The Hiring Challenge
Recruitment Challenges: Hiring is Harder

- More than 50% of all respondents say hiring will be much more or more difficult compared to the past.
- Less than 5% said that hiring would be easier or much easier.

How Difficult To Hire Permanent Staff Compared To the Past?

Source: 2023 Elections & Voting Information LEO Survey
Recruitment Challenges: Hiring is Harder

- More than 50% of all respondents say hiring will be **much more or more difficult** compared to the past.
- Less than 5% said that hiring would be easier or much easier.
- Even greater challenges for **temporary staff**.

![Chart showing difficulty in hiring temporary staff by size of jurisdiction](chart.png)

**How Difficult To Hire Temporary Staff Compared To the Past?**

- **Green**: Much more difficult
- **Light Green**: Somewhat more difficult
- **Red**: The same or less difficult

Source: 2023 Elections & Voting Information LEO Survey
Recruitment Challenges: Hiring is Harder

- More than 50% of all respondents say hiring will be much more or more difficult compared to the past.
- Less than 5% said that hiring would be easier or much easier.

Source: 2023 Elections & Voting Information LEO Survey
The Hiring Challenges: Pay and Job Descriptions

- Potential applicants view election jobs as **underpaid**.
- Jobs in election offices are **not always classified with technical or other specific skills** to allow better pay.
- Compared to other county jobs, **positions in elections offices**

*Responses for jurisdictions with 25,000 registered voters or more*
EVIC Contact Information

Paul Gronke, PhD | EVIC Director
gronkep@reed.edu

Paul Manson, PhD | EVIC Research Director
mansonp@pdx.edu

Michelle M. Shafer | EVIC Senior Program Advisor
shaferm@reed.edu

Web: EVIC Website & LEO Survey Website | X (Twitter): @ElectionsVoting