

Notes from the ACCA/CCCMA webinar on Inflation (3/30/2023)

Recruitment/Retention

Many are feeling challenges with staffing. Some have considered recruiting out of state for remote workers, but that adds a level of complication related to other state's employment laws.

Salary studies are very important for recruitment and retention. If your existing employees are leaving because they want more money, it's cheaper to pay them more. You really need to pay at scale.

Some have found they're losing employees to neighboring communities.

It used to be that the smaller communities didn't have to compete with the big communities, but with so many jobs going remote, that's no longer the case.

When jobs can't be filled, it has been necessary to go to contractors for services.

Strategies have included adding a paid parental leave policy or increasing other benefits, hiring bonuses, retention bonuses, and a loan forgiveness program. Work-life balance is also important. More people are asking for flexible work schedules, part-time work, or remote work. It's important to look at each position with an open mind to determine what kinds of flexibility the position can afford to offer.

Some have added training to recruit local people who don't have the skills to do a job but can be trained to the needed positions. Also, training has been added for current employees, which has sometimes helped with retention, but sometimes those employees stay only long enough to get the training and then leave.

The culture is important. People like to be kept informed about the general direction of the town/county and like to know where they fit—what their role is.

Surveys can be helpful if you do something with the results. It can be difficult to find ways to realistically compare your survey results with those of similar communities.

Comparing job descriptions can also be helpful, but can also be difficult, especially when a small community uses hybrid job descriptions where employees are doing multiple things. IPMA HR can be helpful. The state site is here <https://ipmahrcolorado.wildapricot.org>

One commented that their community went to a 4-day business week, and attrition went down to 9%. During pandemic it was up about 22%.

Staff need to see leadership. Leaders need to show up so the rank and file knows they are important. It goes a long way if you get out there with your community's employees and recognize what they're doing and thank them.

Opportunities for advancement are important.

Budgeting and Spending

Some have moved to more program-based budgeting because costs have gone up so much.

Developing strategies for long-term maintenance of assets can be a challenge. If you delay maintenance, you end up with a larger bill eventually. Some are trying to be less reactive and more intentional by allocating budget based on lifecycle maintenance.

There is concern that increases in revenue that many of achieved due to online sales taxes and increased property values/taxes may be temporary. A concern is that this can result in the temptation to put programs in place that address a pent-up demand for new service but might not be sustainable long-term.

Many companies are adding to their contracts with the message that the increase is related to inflation, but often they can't back up their increases with data on what increases they're experiencing, which gives us some leverage to get increases reduced.

The principle of requiring increases to be justified with data applies also to departments by making sure they provide better justification for new staff and increases in their line-item budgets.