



ASSOCIATION OF
METROPOLITAN
PLANNING
ORGANIZATIONS

Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations

2018 MPO Salary Survey Results

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2018 MPO Salary Survey Overview

Background

The Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) conducted a salary survey of the nation's MPOs in 2018. AMPO developed the electronic survey using an online software tool and invited AMPO members, via email, to respond to the survey. A total of seventy-five MPOs responded to the survey over several weeks, which is a response rate of approximately 52%.

The survey asked for MPO annual budget, staff levels, allocation of budget for staffing purposes, pay increases, benefits offered, and salaries for the following common positions:

- Executive/MPO Director
- Deputy/Assistant MPO Director
- Principal/Senior Planner, AICP
- Principal/Senior Planner, not certified
- Principal/Senior Engineer, PE
- Principal/Senior Engineer, not PE
- Planner II, AICP
- Planner II, not certified
- Engineer II, PE
- Engineer II, not PE
- Planner I, AICP
- Planner I, not certified
- Engineer I, PE
- Engineer I, not PE
- GIS Specialist
- Office Manager
- Economist
- C/AV, Shared Mobility, or Emerging Technology
- Public Involvement
- Modeler

The survey also asked respondents about staffing challenges they face and unmet staffing needs.

Key Survey Findings

The MPOs that participated in the survey represent MPOs of various size, budget, and geographical location. Some of the key survey findings for MPOs participating in the 2018 survey are:

- Annual budgets of MPOs ranged from \$160,000 to \$28,000,000.
- A total of thirty-two MPOs had an annual budget of \$1,000,000 or more, while the remainder had a budget of less than \$1,000,000.
- The average MPO budget was \$1,612,934 and the median budget was \$1,470,404.

- MPO staff size ranged from 0.5 to 58 FTE. The average staff size was 7.9 FTE and the median was 5 FTE.
- Among MPOs with similar budgets, the number of employees varied considerably.
- The vast majority of MPOs received more than 70% of their funding from federal sources.
- Most MPOs spent at least half of their budgets on staff salaries and benefits. However, about a quarter of MPOs spent less than half of their budget on staff salaries and benefits.
- The top three employee benefits provided by MPOs for full-time employees are health insurance, paid time off, retirement benefits, and life insurance. Many MPOs provide a wide range of other benefits including flextime, tuition reimbursement, telecommuting, and flexible spending accounts for childcare.
- The salary range for the Executive Director position varied the most among the positions queried.
- 28% of MPOs indicated they face challenges in paying current staff salaries and benefits, including several MPOs with budgets in the millions of dollars.
- 44% of MPOs responded that they have staff positions they are in need of but cannot afford to pay for, including several MPOs with budgets in the millions of dollars.

The detailed survey responses are provided in the next section.

Survey Results

Section – General Information

1. What is the annual budget of your MPO? (listed from highest to lowest)

Annual MPO budgets in 2018 ranged from \$160,000 to \$28,000,000. The average MPO budget was \$1,612,934 and the median budget was \$1,470,404.

2. How many people are on your MPO staff?

MPO staff size ranged from 0.5 to 58 FTE. The average staff size was 7.9 FTE and the median was 5 FTE.

\$20 - \$30 million	# of FTE
\$28,000,000	58
\$10 - \$19.9 million	
\$16,300,000 (National Capital Regional Transportation Planning Board)	51
\$11,000,000 (Broward MPO)	25
\$5 - \$9.9 million	
\$5,100,000 (Metropolitan Council)	27
\$4 - \$4.9 million	
\$4,385,100	10
\$4,000,000 (San Luis Obispo COG)	19
\$3 - \$3.9 million	
\$3,883,610 (Capital Area MPO [North Carolina])	16
\$3,500,000 (Thurston Regional Planning Council)	15
\$3,362,422 (Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho)	18
\$2 - \$2.9 million # of FTE	
\$2,887,127 (Palm Beach Transportation Planning Association)	13
\$2,600,000 (Mid-Region MPO)	14.5
\$2,500,000 (South Jersey TPO)	9
\$2,406,162 (Space Coast TPO)	9
\$2,331,800 (Alamo Area MPO)	17
\$2,325,884 (Genesee Transportation Council)	8
\$2,000,000 (Capital Area MPO [Texas])	16
\$2,000,000 (Tahoe Regional Planning Agency)	6

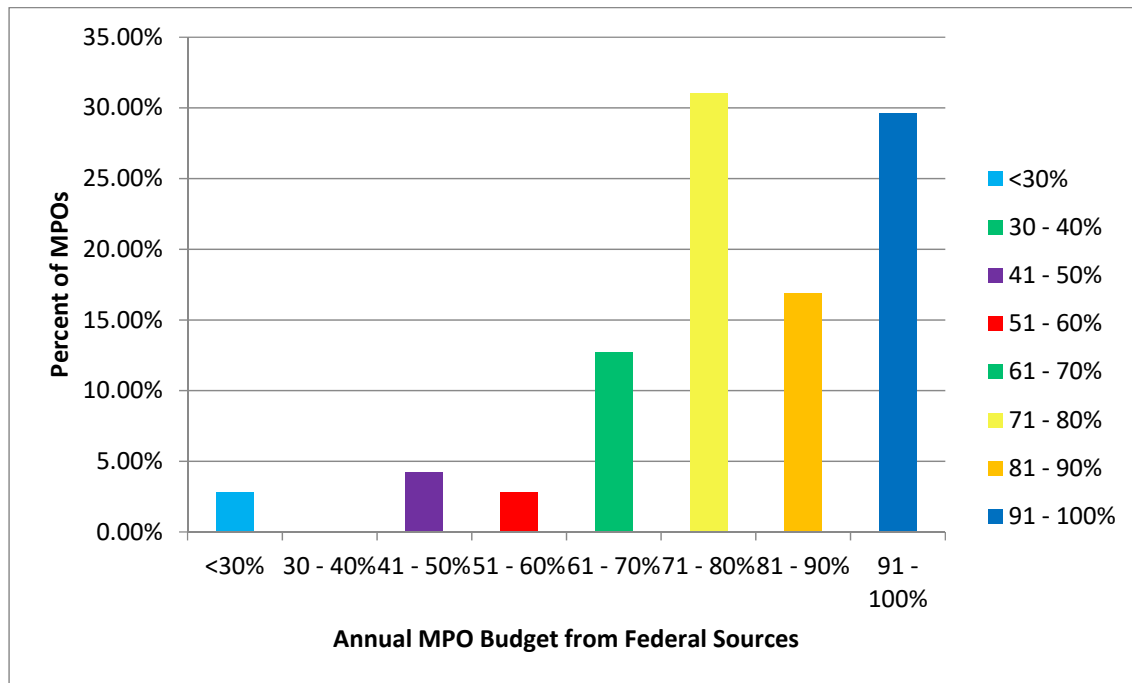
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\$1 – \$1.9 million	# of FTE
\$1,921,683 (Whatcom COG)	8.1
\$1,800,000	10
\$1,700,000 (Knoxville MPO)	9
\$1,691,000 (River to Sea TPO)	8
\$1,600,000 (Fredericksburg Area MPO)	6
\$1,500,000 (Hidalgo County MPO)	9
\$1,476,468 (Sarasota/Manatee MPO)	9
\$1,464,340 (Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions)	6
\$1,400,000 (Des Moines Area MPO)	9
\$1,300,000 (Oahu MPO)	8
\$1,098,000 (Gainesville-Hall MPO)	2
\$1,000,000 (Madison Area Transportation Planning Board)	7.5
\$1,000,000 (Ozarks Transportation Organization)	5
\$1,000,000	5
\$1,000,000 (Grand Forks and East Grand Forks MPO)	4
\$800,000 - \$999,999	
\$935,900 (Duchess County Transportation Council)	3
\$896,000 (Northwest Arkansas RPC)	8
\$850,000 (KYOVA Interstate Planning Commission)	5
\$835,000 (Cheyenne MPO)	5
\$800,000 (Flagstaff MPO)	2.5
\$600,000 - \$799,999	
\$775,254 (Corpus Christi MPO)	6
\$750,000 (Duluth-Superior MPO)	7
\$750,000 (Rapides Area Planning Commission)	4.5
\$750,000 (Coastal Regional MPO)	4
\$750,000 (Indian River MPO)	4
\$600,000	5
\$400,000 - \$599,999 # of FTE	
\$530,000	2
\$500,000 (Brownsville MPO)	5
\$500,000	3
\$500,000 (Dixie MPO)	2.5
\$485,000	4
\$483,000 (Bangor Area Comprehensive Transportation System)	4
\$476,210 (Fairbanks Metropolitan Area Transportation System)	2.5
\$472,491 (Lubbock MPO)	3
\$450,000 (Waco MPO)	3.5
\$450,000 (Bend MPO)	1.5
\$436,000	6
\$431,000 (Clarksville MPO)	2
\$400,000 (Dubuque MPO)	3.5

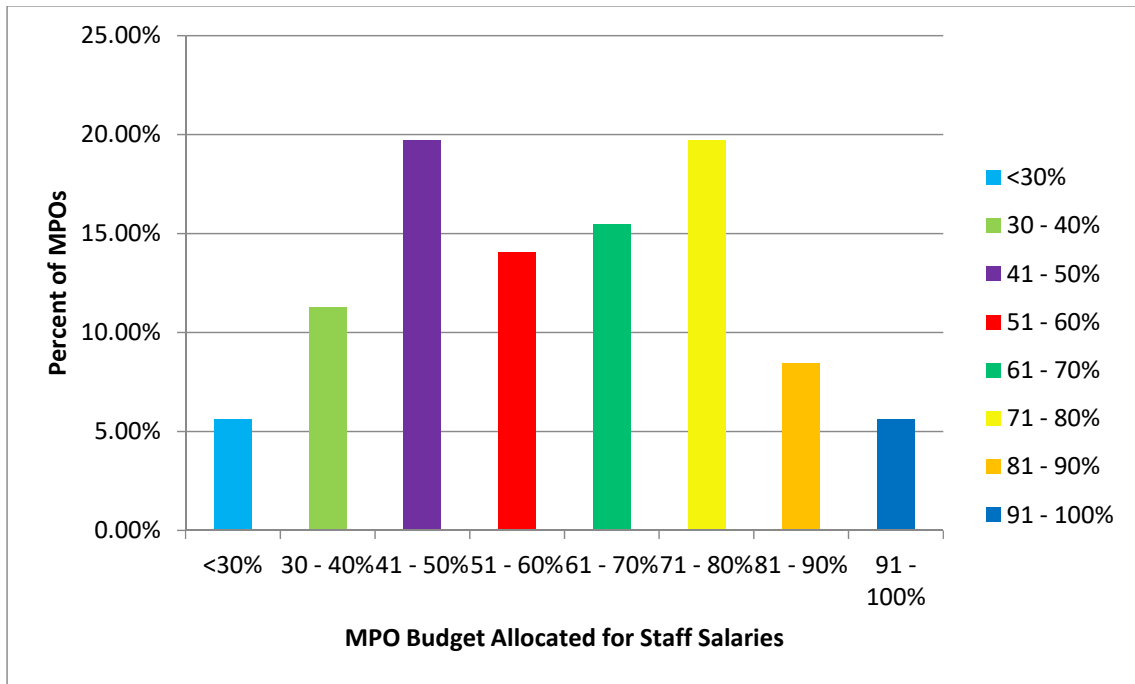
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\$200,000 - \$399,999	# of FTE
\$377,000 (Herkimer-Oneida County Transportation Study)	2.5
\$361,525 (Bannock TPO)	1
\$334,862 (Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council)	3
\$328,712 (New River Valley MPO)	2
\$325,000 (Charlottesville Albemarle MPO)	3
\$280,000 (Cowlitz-Wahkiakum COG)	3
\$275,000 (Southern Illinois MPO)	1
\$275,000	-
\$230,000 (San Angelo MPO)	3
\$226,000 (Texarkana MPO)	2
\$222,986 (Southeast Arkansas RPC)	2
\$214,000 (Southern Georgia Regional Commission)	2
\$200,000 (Salisbury Wicomico MPO)	0.5
\$199,999 and below	
\$174,500 (Dougherty Area Regional Transportation Study)	1
\$160,000	2

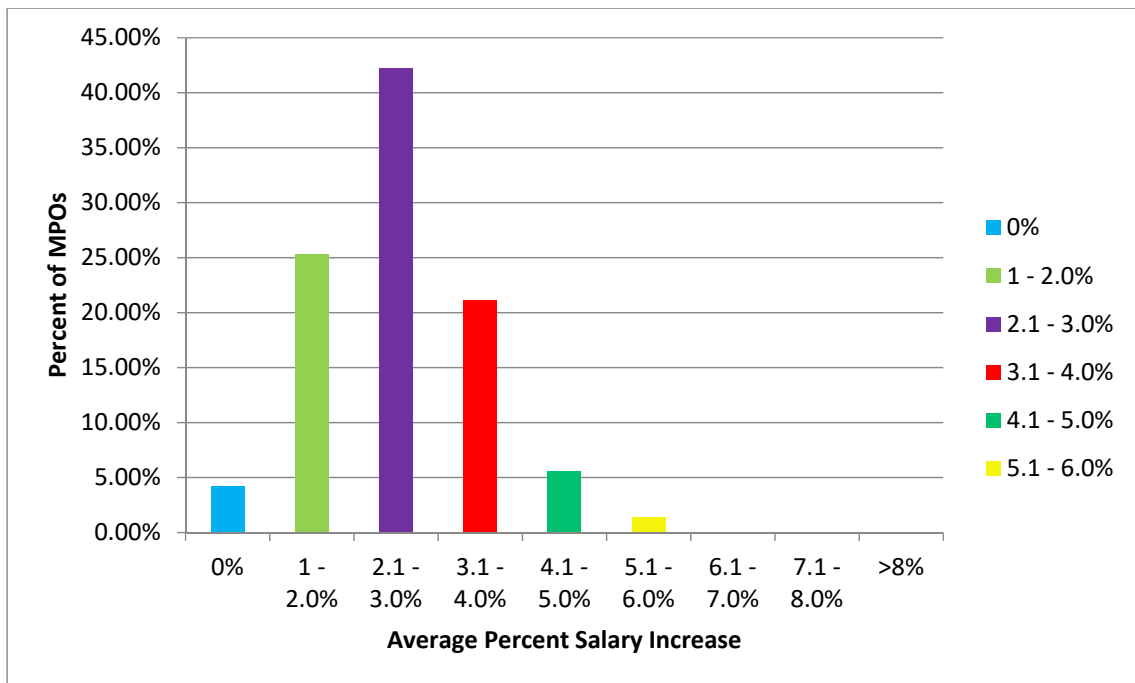
3. What percentage of your annual MPO budget comes from federal sources?



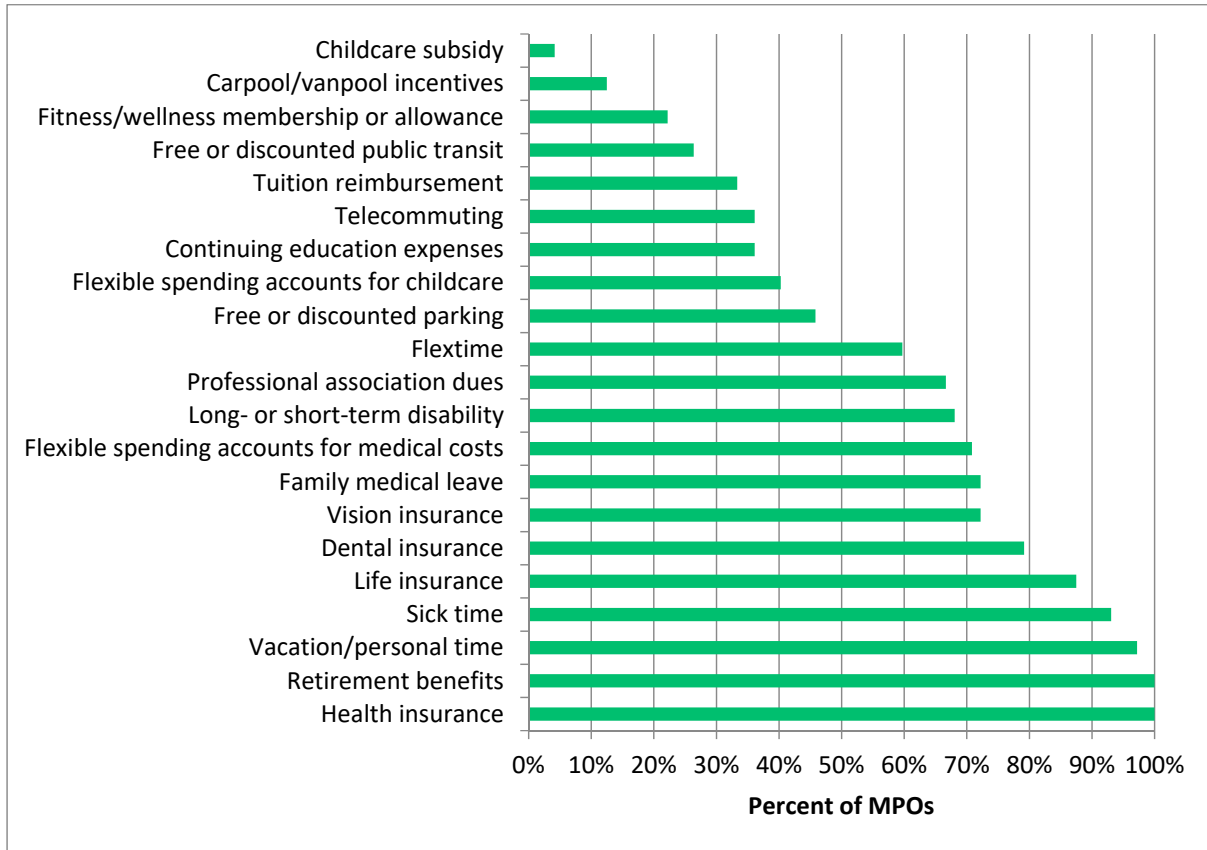
4. What percentage of your MPO's budget is allocated for all staff salaries (including benefits)?



5. What is the average percentage increase to salary that is given for a staff person's raise?



6. Please mark all benefits that your MPO provides for full-time salaried positions (number of MPOs providing benefit).



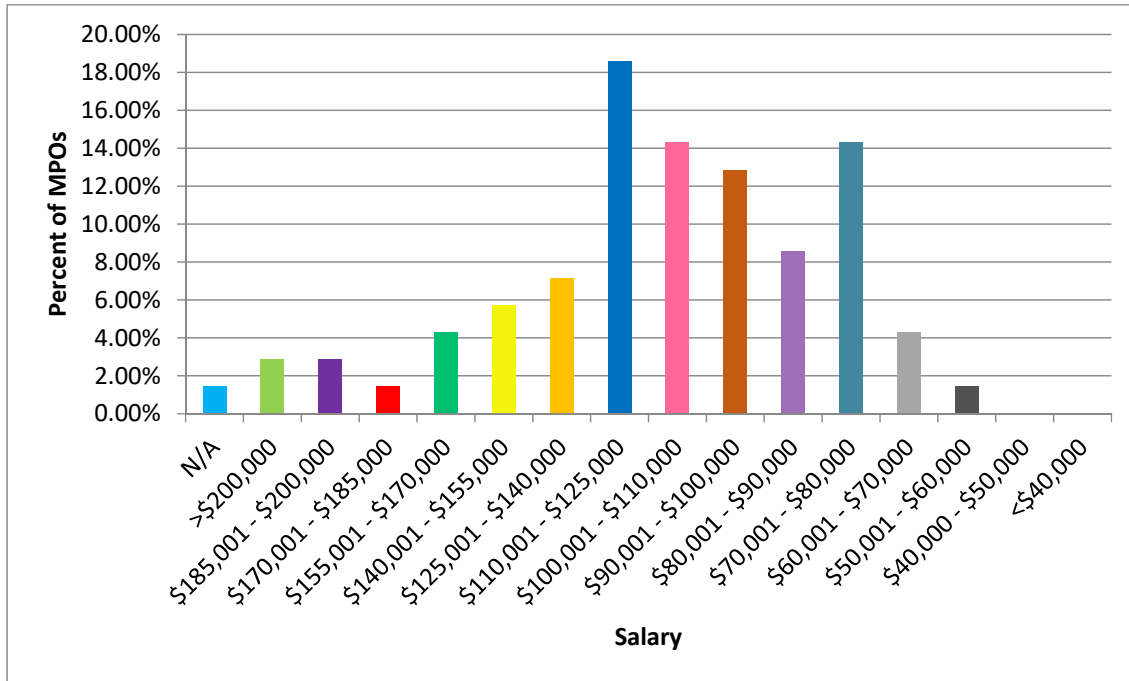
Other:

- Cell phone
- The public transportation system in the town is fare-free
- Union membership
- Some work-related education expenses are reimbursable
- Other benefits are available but employee must pay for them (e.g., vision, dental, and disability)
- Vision and dental are offered, but employer does not subsidize them
- Paid time off (can be used for vacation, sick, or personal)

Section – Staff Salaries

MPOs selected salary ranges for the type of staff at their MPOs. N/A refers to an MPO not having that particular staff position or that position having a salary range not provided in the range given.

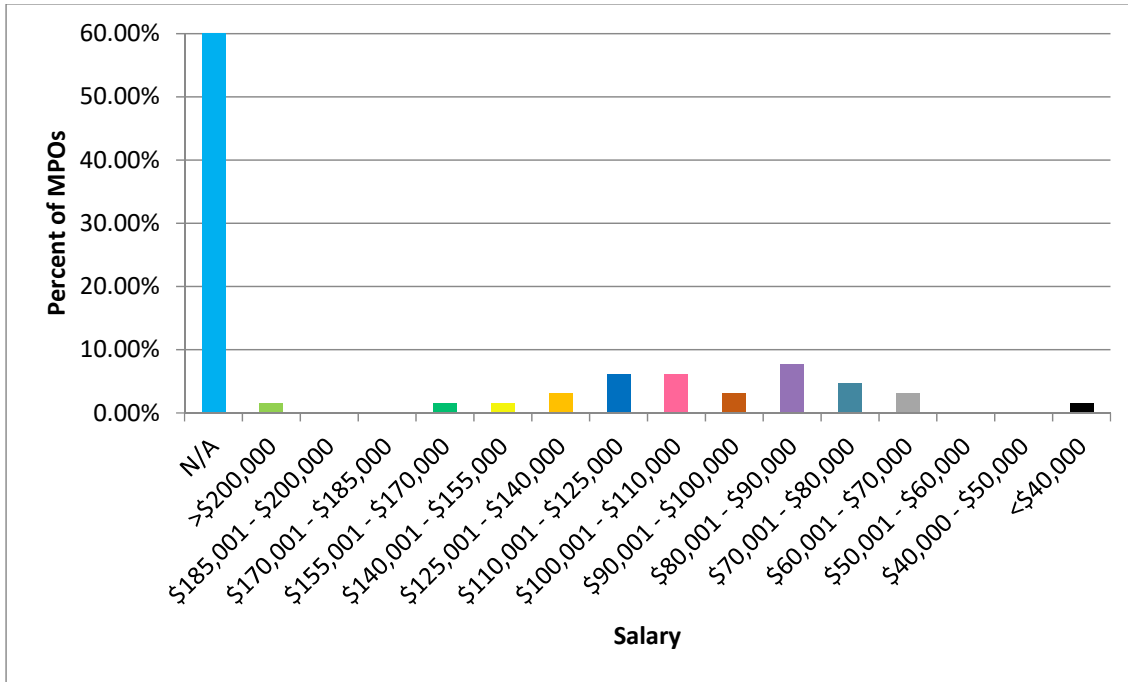
1. Executive/MPO Director



Other:

- \$55,000 - \$109,000

2. Deputy/Assistant MPO Director



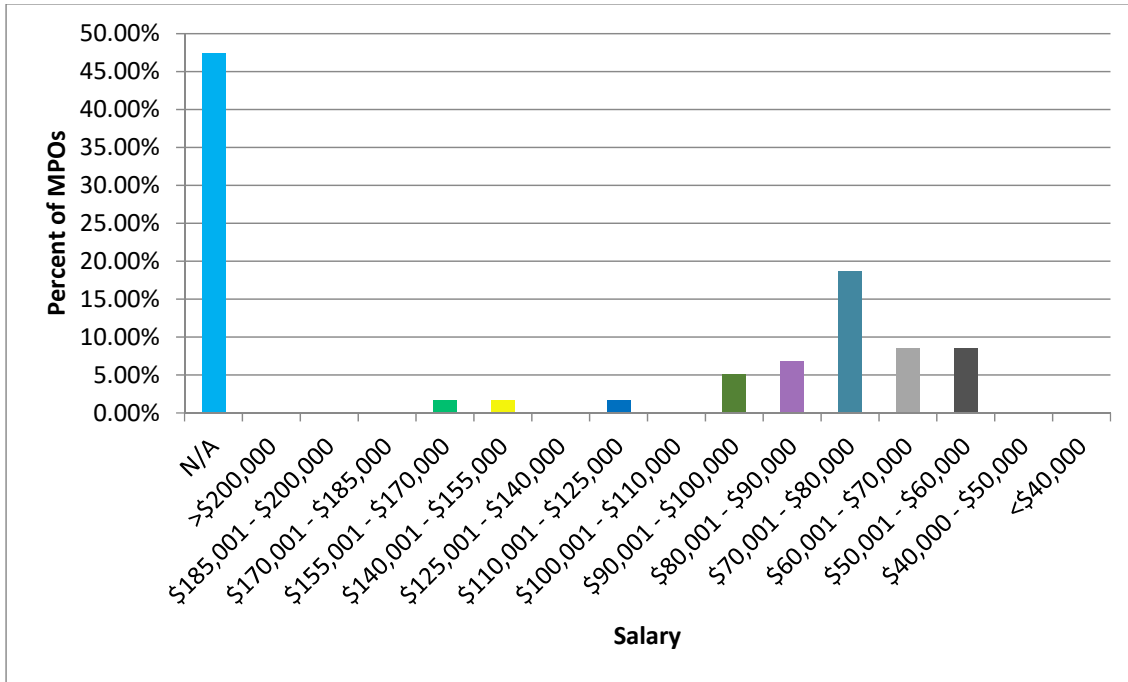
3. Principal/Senior Planner, AICP



Other:

- \$48,000 - \$86,000

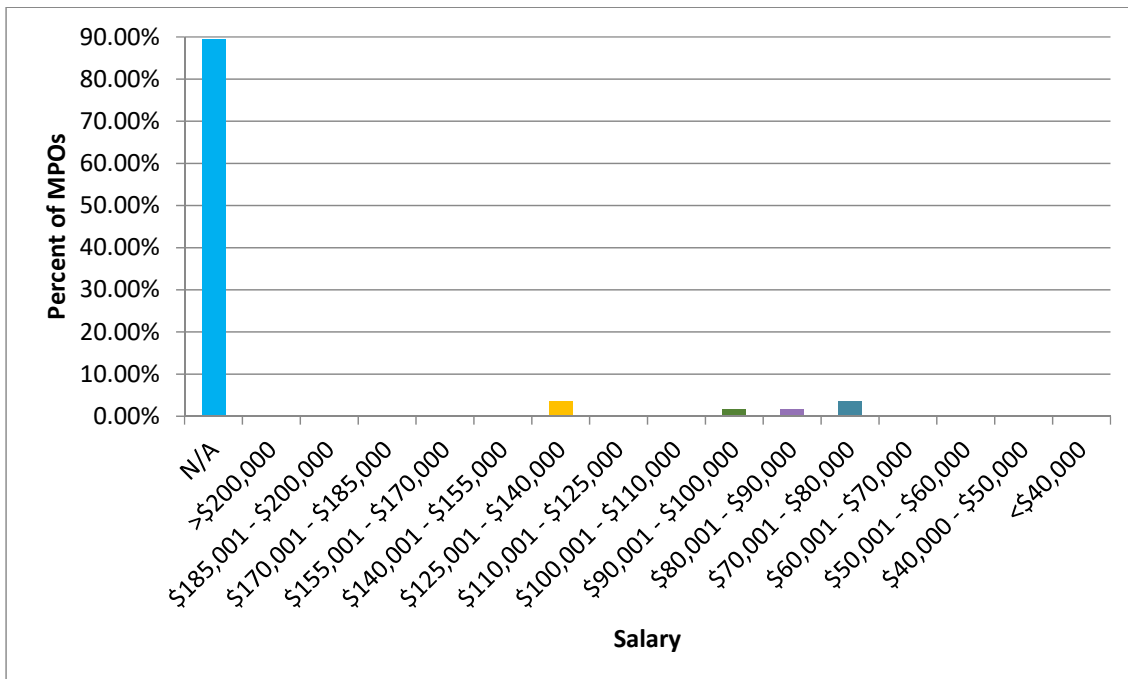
4. Principal/Senior Planner (not certified)



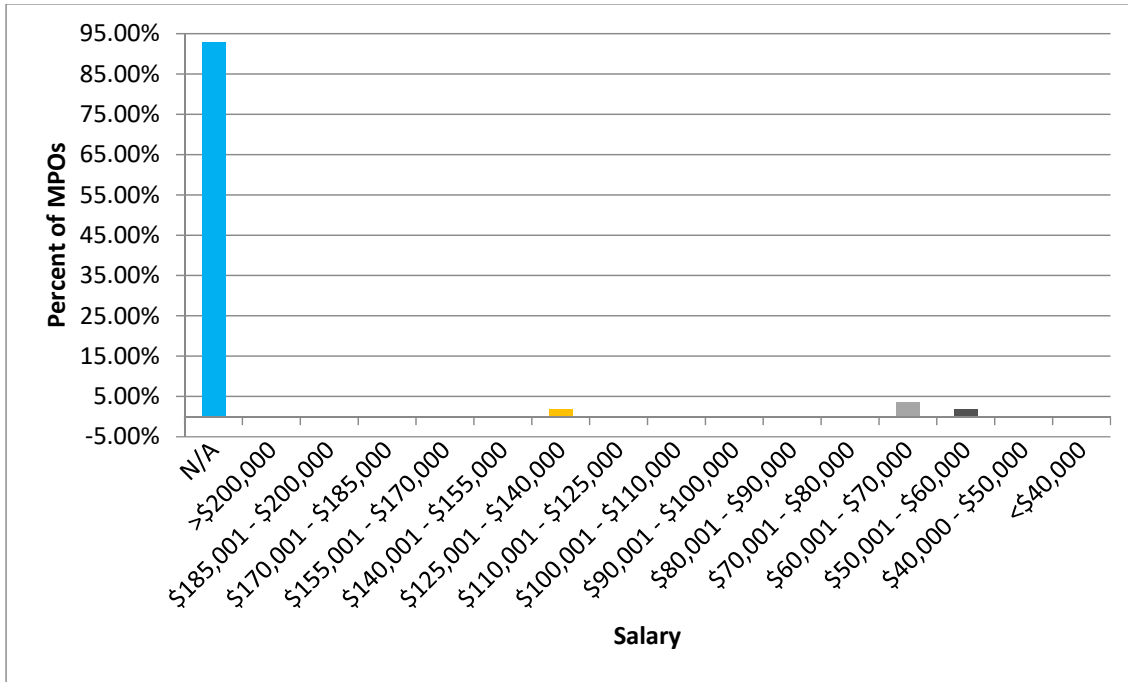
Other:

- \$48,000 - \$86,000

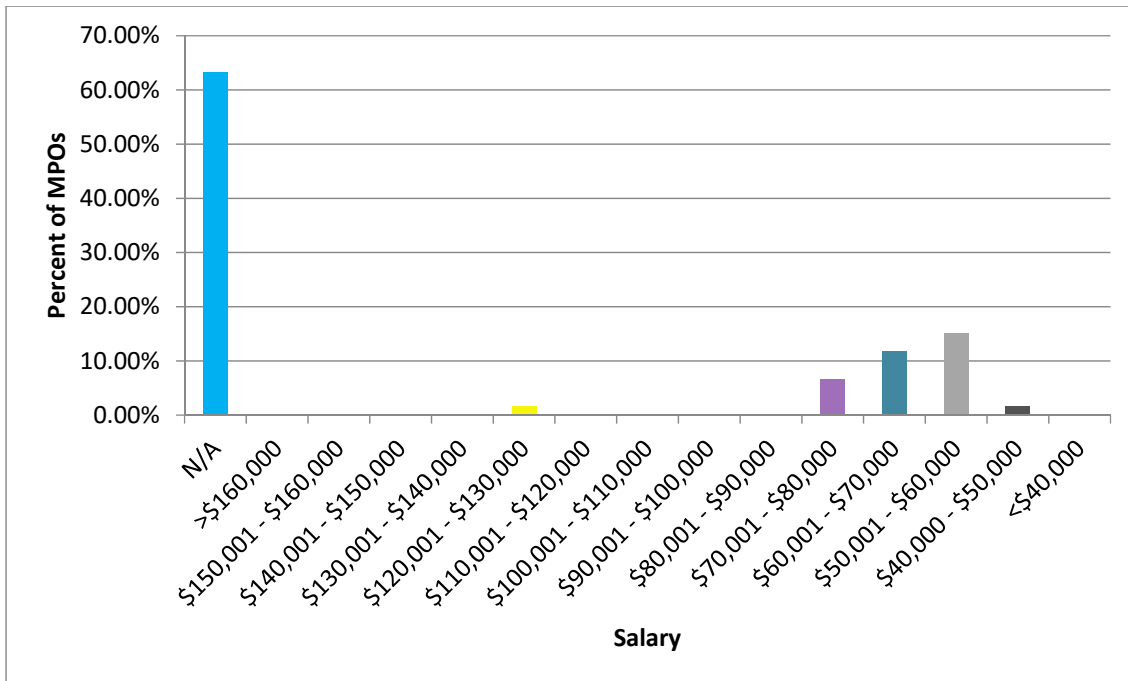
5. Principal/Senior Engineer (PE)



6. Principal/Senior Engineer (not PE)



7. Planner II (AICP)



Other:

- \$39,000 - \$55,000

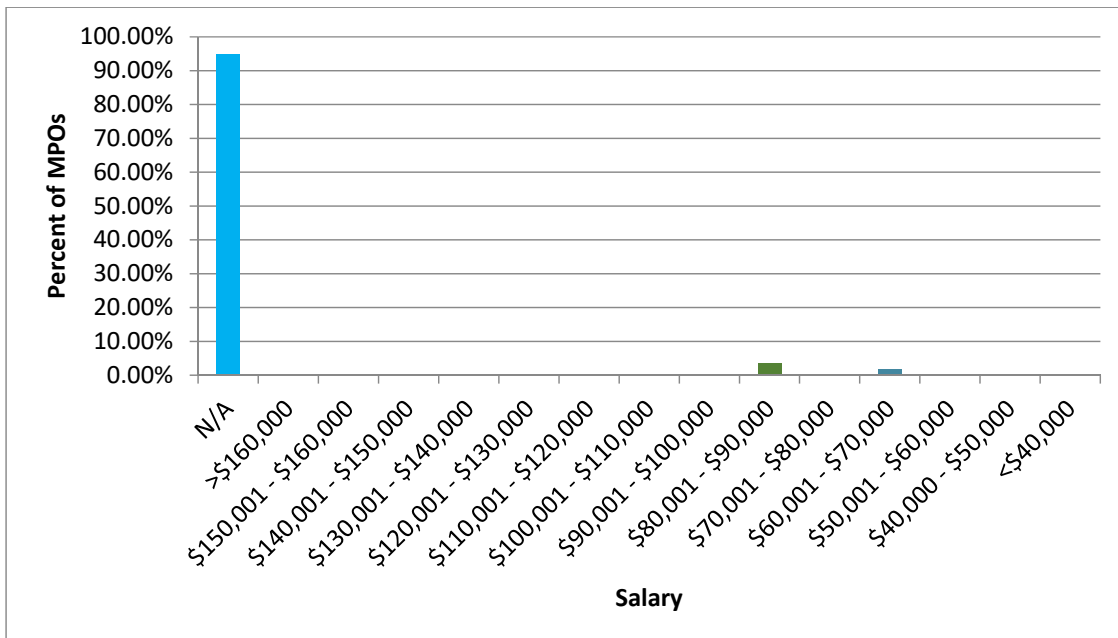
8. Planner II (not certified)



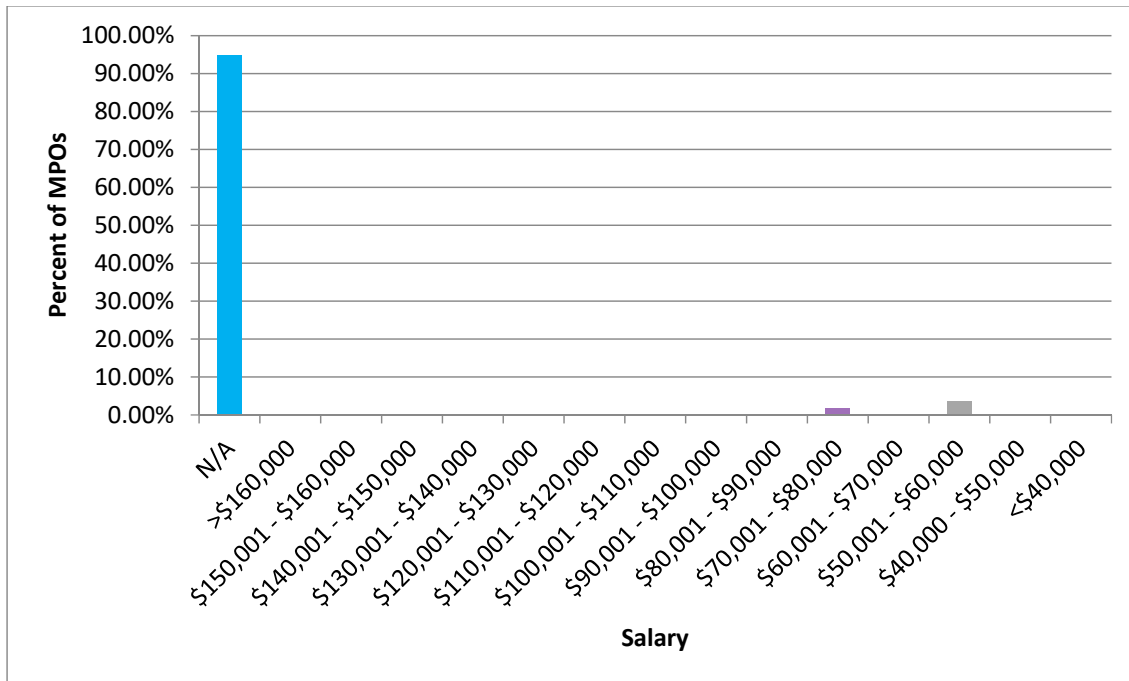
Other:

- \$39,000 - \$55,000
- We have two planners near this salary range
- Halftime position

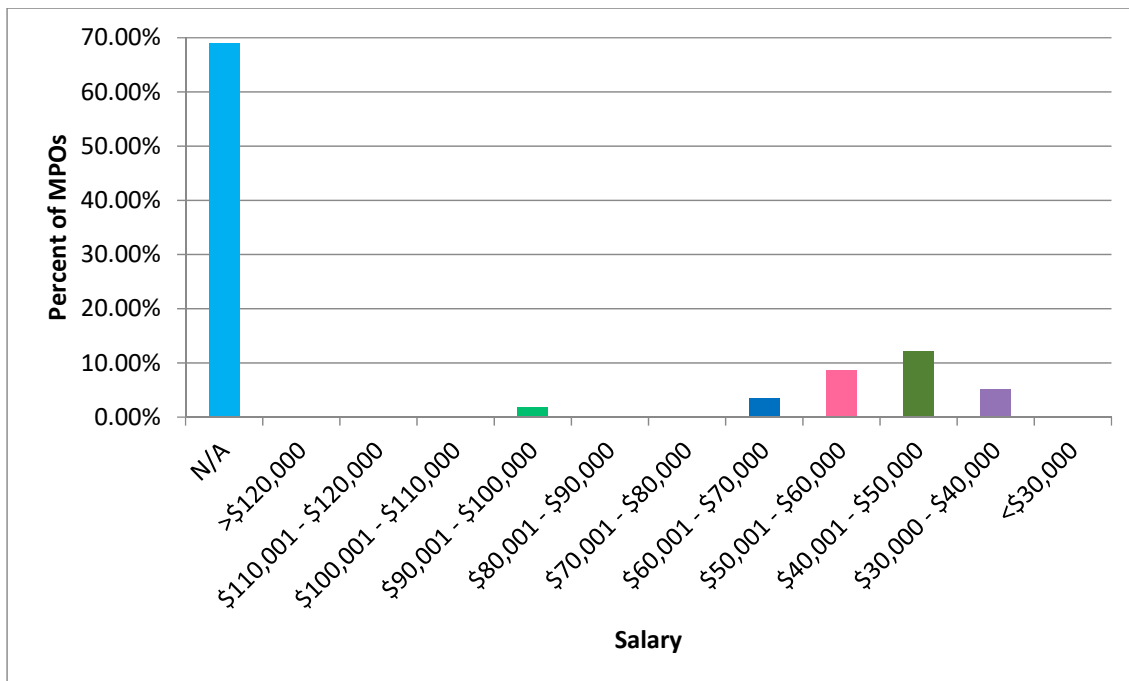
9. Engineer II (PE)



10. Engineer II (not PE)



11. Planner I (AICP)



Other:

- \$36,000 - \$46,000

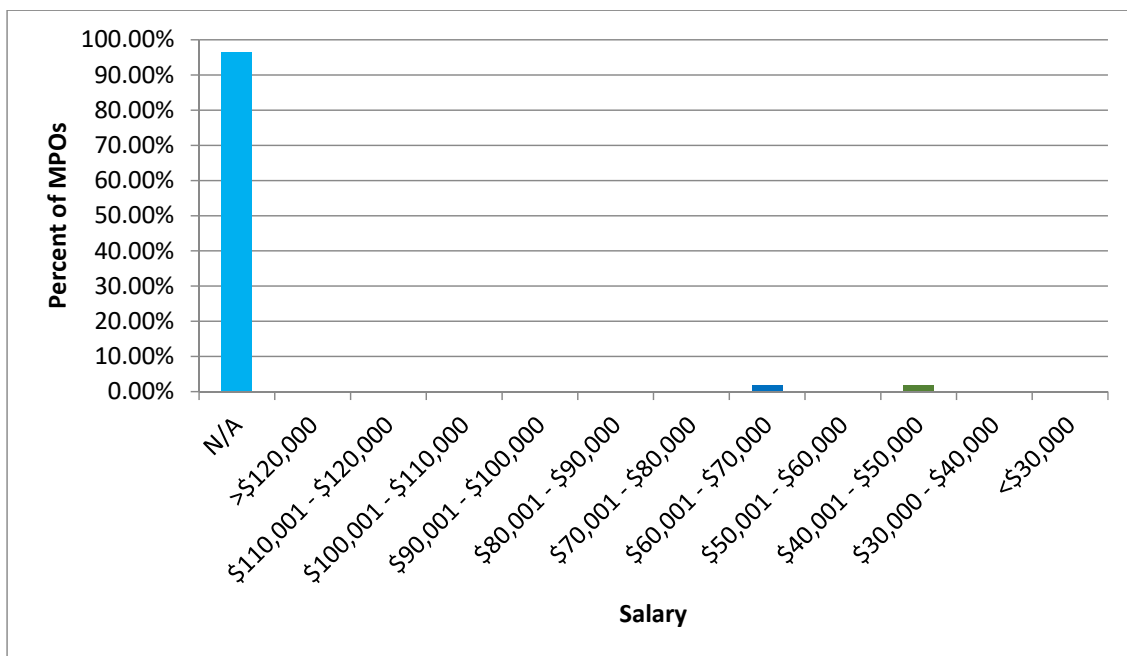
12. Planner I (not certified)



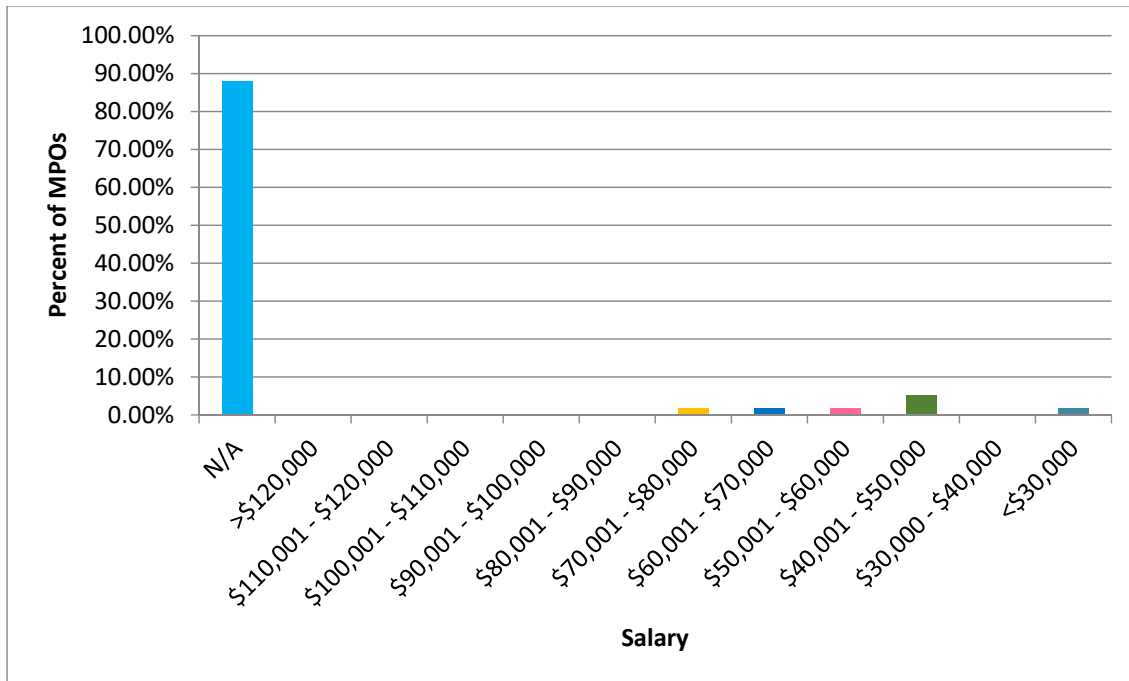
Other:

- \$36,000 - \$46,000
- Halftime position

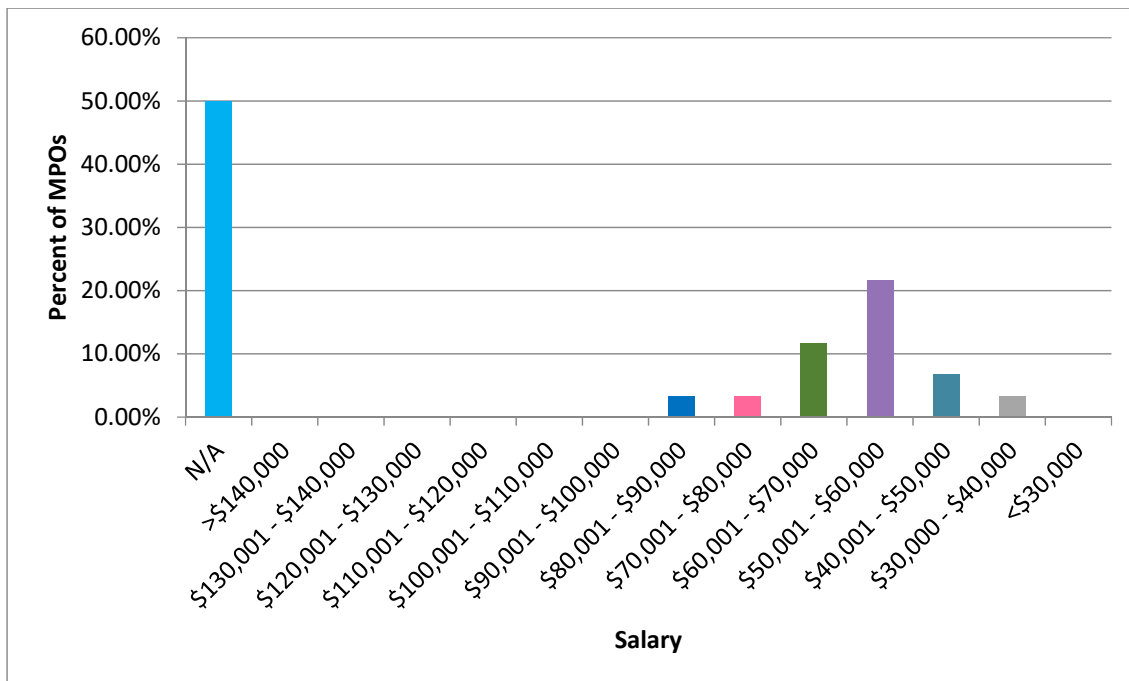
13. Engineer I (PE)



14. Engineer I (not PE)



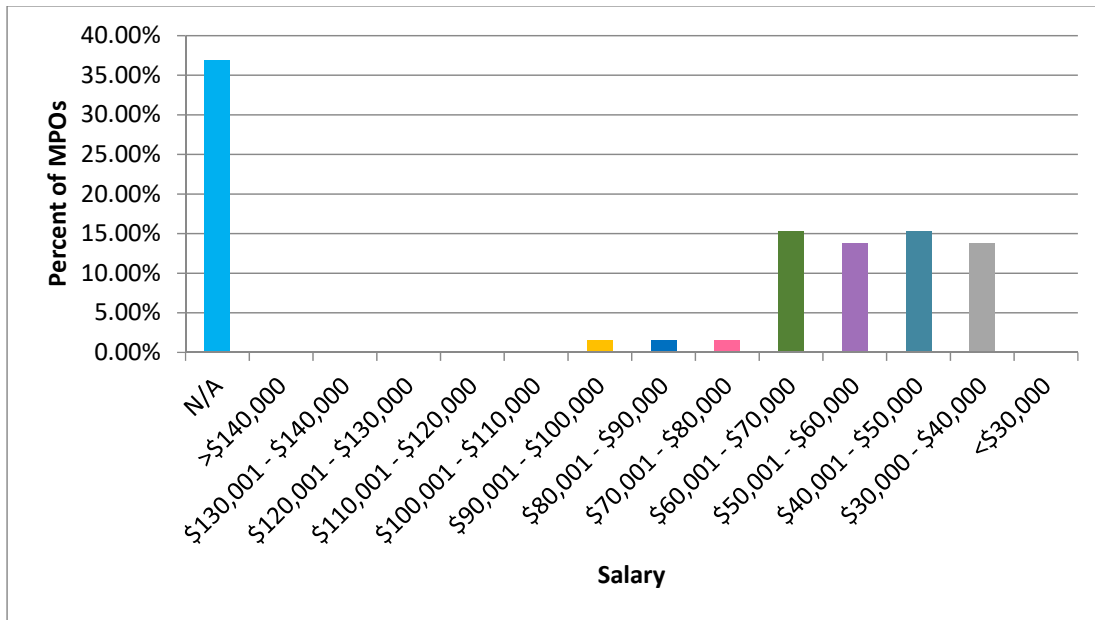
15. GIS Specialists



Other:

- \$35,000 - \$62,000

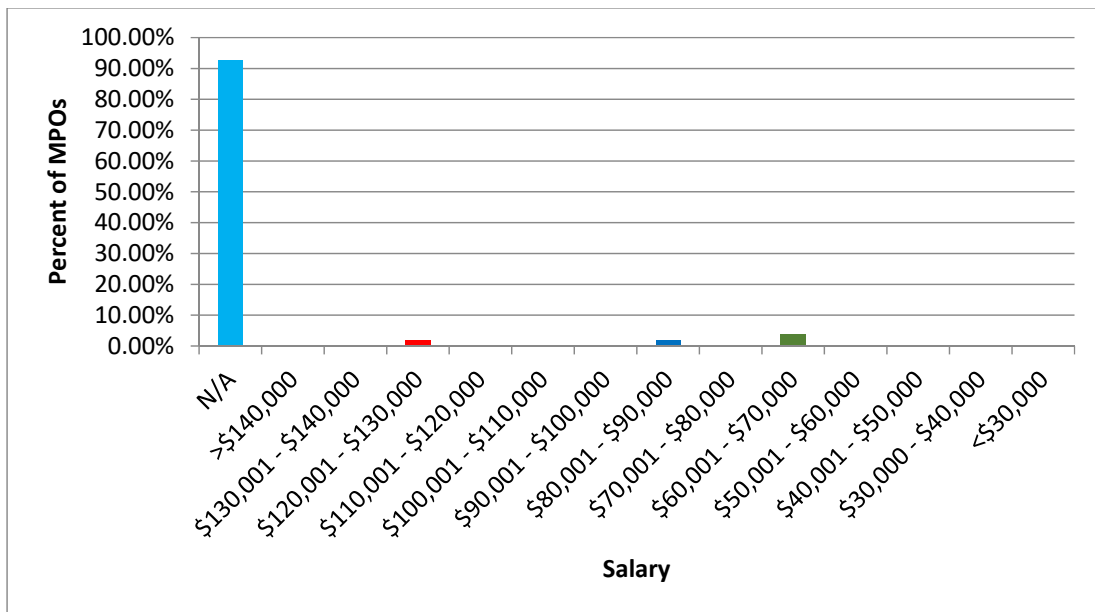
16. Office Manager



Other:

- \$64,000 - \$92,000

17. Economist



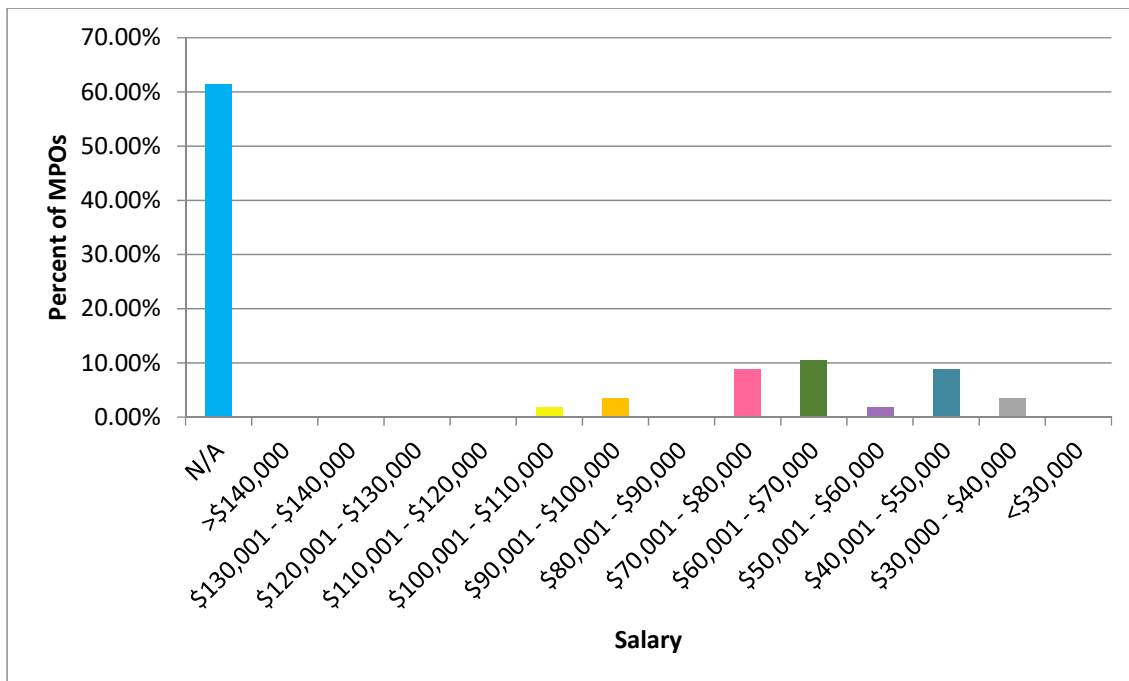
Other:

- Accountant

18. C/AV, Shared Mobility, or Emerging Technology



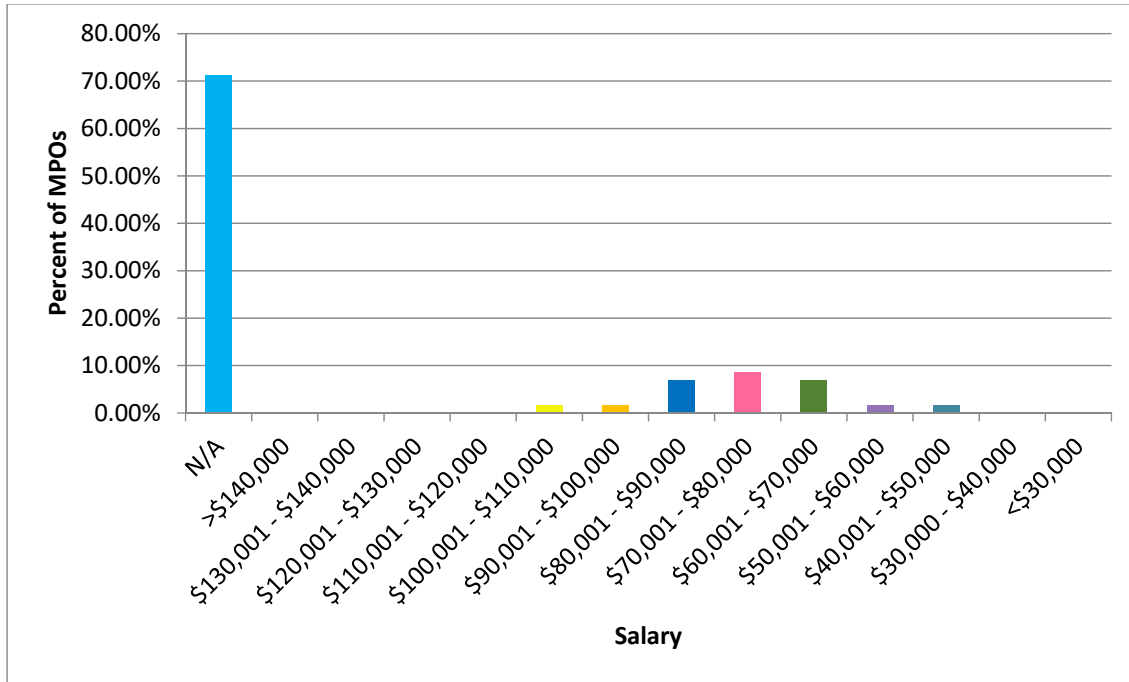
19. Public Involvement



Other:

- Public Relations \$99,000 – \$130,000

20. Modeler

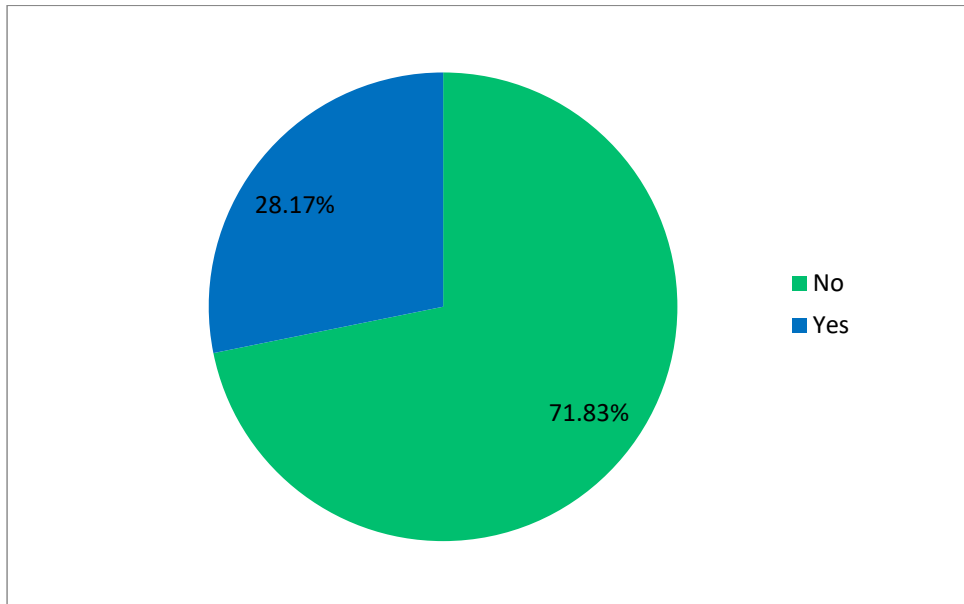


Other:

- \$71,000 which represents 80% of full salary

Section - Current Challenges

1. Does your MPO face challenges in paying current staff salaries and benefits?



Explanations:

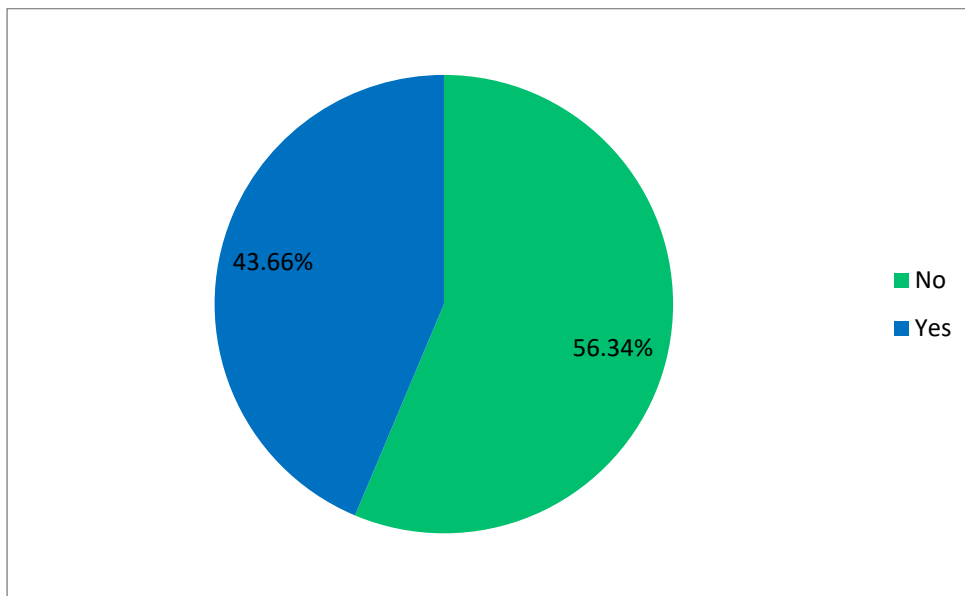
- Benefit cost increases outpace revenues.
- Rising pension and benefit costs.
- Formula grants do not cover loaded staff salaries. Must rely on local dues contributions each year to bridge gap. Host agency does not have a dedicated source of funding to rely on. Must go through multiple budget processes each year with member agencies to request/secure funds.
- We are in a high cost area and have a very low unemployment rate. The market is very competitive. It is difficult to hire and retain staff because consultants are also looking for the same skill sets.
- Funding is not adequate for small MPOs to keep full time staffing levels.
- Federal funding has not kept up with inflation and the increased costs of doing business
- Salaries would remain static if we weren't forced to do without upgraded equipment and resources.
- We are an unusual agency (bi state) and have federal grants, but must "self fund" additional funds for merit pay and bonuses.
- Two planning staff are currently half time because of lack of funding. Hiring is difficult for part-time positions.
- Inability of the 1) federal sources to increase and 2) the local match to increase to compensate for point 1.
- I would like to hire a staff engineer.

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Explanations (continued):

- All MPO employees are City employees. City staff raises have been erratic. Sometimes the MPO staff can get raises/independent of the City.
- With additional requirements of staff and no increase in funding, compensating staff for new/additional work is becoming complicated.
- PL fund allocations have not kept pace with insurance and other cost increases
- Difficulty keeping pace with competitive positions.
- We are currently hosted by the City who does not provide a step increase program or merit increases. They only provide a cost of living increase which does not cover the health care increase that employees take 100% of. Currently, the MPO is in the path to become a non-profit and separate from the city. A big factor is the fact that the city only contributes \$850 per month, leaving employees to cover the remaining \$1,200 and change.
- Our standard federal funding (PL and 5303) today is about 1% below what we received in 2012-13. Our costs have continued to increase and we must use a percentage of our STBG funding to maintain our annual operating budget, including personnel costs.

2. Are there particular staff positions that your MPO is in need of, but cannot afford to pay for?



Explanations:

- Modeler
- Additional planners
- We really need a couple of general practitioners. People who can read, write, research, interpret, organize, and chase plan amendments, etc.
- We need someone to do marketing and public participation on a full-time basis.

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Explanations (continued):

- An engineer to assist agencies (e.g., very small municipalities) with project development
- Needs of MPO are not always well understood or given a high priority by host agency, which dictates staffing and salaries. Administrative support is lacking, forcing senior staff to cover basic tasks such as meeting agendas, minutes, mailings, etc., ultimately at a higher hourly rate.
- Transportation planner, mobility coordinator, and public involvement
- Modeler
- GIS specialist
- Modeler
- GIS Tech
- GIS person, To pay a person with GIS and planning experience would really put the MPO budget in a strain having 3 FTE.
- Modeler, public input, and data analysts
- Need to expand from part-time to full-time.
- Technical staff such as additional modeler and data analyst. Emerging tech position as well.
- Travel Demand Modeler and GIS Technician
- Full time experienced travel demand modeler.
- Engineers; more model assistance individuals
- It would help to have a separate GIS staff position
- In light of the new performance measures and data analytics required, we may need to hire Data Scientists but cannot afford with current PL funds
- As a one person MPO, we could always use another planner, but the budget does not allow.
- We are in need of a technical staff position, such as an analyst who can gather data and analyze it.
- We only have a part-time planner and could use one full-time.
- This is difficult to explain. We have modeling and GIS expertise but no position allocated to those activities (it is a preferred skill for planning staff). Because it is only one of several skills for general planners, it is difficult to get these positions adequately compensated.
- Data modeler
- Modeler, difficult to find at a reasonable cost.
- We offered up to \$70K for a modeler with 3 years of experience in Citilabs CUBE/Voyager with a good pension plan and excellent health benefits and could get no qualified applicants for that salary range. Qualified applicants were requesting above \$80K in salary. As a result, we have been using consultants for this work task.
- Professional Planner
- We require a CEI position but cannot budget for until the following year.
- GIS Coordinator
- A well rounded planner 2.

3. Any additional comments?

- We also have an Information Manager that takes care of all matters involving computers/websites-social media/graphics
- Salary \$70 to \$80K
- We are an MPO in a quasi-state agency. All planners, including middle managers, are unionized. Raises and raise schedules are fairly uniform (with some exceptions).
- Since there has been no increase in federal PL and 5303 funds and we have been required to meet additional federal requirements (PBPP), we are starting to be concerned about future UPWPs.
- Average staff longevity is 13.25 years.
- Contract out modeling services
- Use state DOT staff
- Our Executive Director of 31 years retire last week. Over the next 6-12 months it is likely that an evaluation of current positions, salaries and staffing needs will be conducted as the new director will need to determine if any changes needed.
- The MPO is housed within the Consolidated Government and they determine the raises for all staff.
- When 2020 census is certified, we should become a TMA & will have to add 3 – 4 new staff.
- Note: salaries for planner positions based on part-time status.
- I'm not sure what you are asking when you asked about challenges in paying MPO salaries.
- We would have no challenges in absorbing higher salaries within our budget. However, there is a considerable resistance by our Steering Committee to appropriately pay MPO staff. The leaders are resisting urbanization on one hand and resent that the MPO is facilitating urbanization.
- Our MPO uses consultant contracts to accomplish much of our planning activities.
- Our MPO is not a standalone MPO and our salaries/benefits are at the mercy of the annual city budget. Even though we might have enough in grant funding to give ourselves a raise or hire another person, we are not allowed to by the policies of the city.
- Our challenge is not financial, we have enough PL funds for current and additional staff. The issue is our fiscal agent's restrictions on creating and filling staff positions. Until recently, our fiscal agent had an across the board hiring freeze and also had a policy of not just rejecting new position authorizations but eliminating positions if they were vacated through attrition. It did not matter how the position was funded. The concept was that it gave a 'good perception'.
- If we are able to go independent, we are hoping to create a better working environment for the employees and provide incentives for them to stay.
- The pension program and health care in MANDATORY for employees (no opt-out option). Also, if an employee leaves before serving 5 years (vested), they will lose 100% of the money that was taken out of their checks for pension. "
- There seem to be many other considerations missing from this analysis:
 - Benefits paid by the employer (auto allowance, subsidized health care, employer contributions for retirement). Non-wage compensation should be considered.

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Additional comments (continued):

- Total budgets vary from year to year based on funding for "special studies." You should ensure the annual budget is based on a typical year.
- More should be investigated regarding wage increases. We had a 3% across the board last year w/ an additional 1% for merit for 50% of staff. The upcoming year includes 3% across the board plus a lump sum for "market adjustments." This is intended to recognize the need to adjust salaries for some positions in order to retain skilled employees.
- The survey doesn't seem to differentiate salaries between independent organizations and those housed within city/county government. Overall budgets as well as the responsibilities of an Executive Director are quite different if an organization has HR, legal, procurement and/or financial services provided by local government.
- Track or understand the "housing" relationships that go hand in hand with compensation constraints. Salary is largely at the disposal/ruling of the host agency - if there is a host.