Federal Aviation Administration

FISCAL YEAR

2026 | 2035

AVIATION SAFETY

Oversight and Certification

Workforce Plan

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Executive Summary

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA; Agency) annual Aviation Safety (AVS) Oversight and Certification Workforce Plan (AVS Workforce Plan) outlines the staffing plan for existing and future personnel in AVS. The Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 version of the AVS Workforce Plan focuses on the Aviation Safety Inspector (ASI) and Aviation Safety Engineer (ASE) positions.

The AVS Workforce Plan is divided into four sections. The first section describes the AVS workforce using three staffing categories to fulfill the safety mission: safety critical, safety technical, and operational support (divided between safety professional and safety support). The second section explains the AVS mission, highlighting major safety objectives. The third section describes modeling for the workforce forecast, using data-driven models to anticipate the needs between FY 2026 and FY 2035. The fourth section explores the hiring environment and initiatives to recruit, develop, maintain, and retain safety critical experts.

AVS is dedicated to improving safety and efficiency continuously, in line with FAA's mission to provide the safest and most efficient airspace system in the world. In keeping with this mission, FAA continues to monitor and support Boeing's progress on Safety Management System (SMS) implementation, as required by the amended part 5 SMS rule, and the recommendations from the Aircraft Certification, Safety, and Accountability Act (ACSAA), 2020 (Pub. L. No. 116-260), Section 103 Expert Panel. This past fiscal year, FAA has:

- Published Order 8120.25 - Safety Management Oversight of Design and Production Approval Holders;
- Completed updates to its manufacturing oversight risk model—specifically during periods of increased production—in accordance with the requirements of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 (Pub. L. No. 118-63) Section 314 mandate; and
- Updated Order 8120.23, Certificate Management of Production Approval Holders, to address U.S. Department of Transportation Office of Inspector General (OIG) Safety Recommendations stemming from the Boeing Door Plug investigation. A pressure testing phase is in progress to test the draft changes before final publication.

With publication of the 14 CFR part 5 Safety Management regulation, AVS has intensified its focus on strengthening aviation safety oversight. AVS expanded its safety and engineering workforce, including additional aircraft certification engineering resources and new expertise in industrial and systems engineering to enhance our capability in organization designation authorization (ODA) oversight, and the development and assessment of aviation safety systems. In parallel, FAA is working closely with design and production approval holders, as well as operators, to maintain a strong focus on safety, reinforce the SMS framework, and strengthen accountability—all in support of continuous safety improvements across the National Airspace System (NAS).

In January 2026, the FAA Administrator announced an Agency-wide organizational realignment intended to better position FAA for future success by strengthening our safety foundation, enhancing operational excellence, and improving accountability and transparency. A new SMS office will lead an Agency-wide SMS by centralizing safety management activities previously conducted in five separate lines of business. Implementation of an SMS and a coordinated risk management strategy for the entire Agency will provide a more consistent and proactive approach to safety. Although approximately 200 resources from the AVS organization will be realigned to the SMS office, those resources are not ASIs and ASEs and do not impact this workforce plan. The AVS primary functions of establishing safety standards, conducting safety oversight, and certification and continuous operational safety, remain as described in this document.

Introduction to the AVS Workforce Plan

This 19th annual update of the AVS Workforce Plan satisfies the requirements of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2026 (Pub. L. No. 119-75), as well as Sections 430 and 431 of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. This plan includes information of interest to key external stakeholders, such as the congressional Authorization and Appropriations Committees, and the White House.

This AVS Workforce Plan focuses on Operations-funded, full-time permanent ASIs and ASEs. The AVS Operations-funded workforce is 99 percent of AVS's total workforce. ASIs and ASEs comprise 64 percent of Operations-funded positions and represent 87 percent of the safety critical workforce. This FY 2026 report accounts for aircraft fleet changes, operations forecasts, inspector and engineer attrition, and other factors. At the end of Pay Period 02, ending on January 10, 2026,[1] AVS employed 7,477 aviation professionals.

With the FAA safety mission constantly in mind, everything AVS does across the aviation lifecycle ensures that every entity certified to operate within the NAS meets the required aircraft design and operational safety standards. The NAS is the world's most complex airspace, encompassing commercial and general aviation, as well as the expanding drone, advanced air mobility, and commercial space launch sectors.

This Workforce Plan is designed to strengthen the recruitment, training, and professional development of safety-critical activities with emphasis on ASIs and ASEs. Successful delivery on the aerospace safety mandate demands we hire and retain the right people, with the right skills, at the right time, with the ability to address risk proactively and preemptively throughout NAS.

[1] In January 2026, FAA initiated an Agency-wide organizational realignment. FAA is closely monitoring any potential impact to AVS and will adjust its staffing levels as needed. Because the realignment occurred recently, any potential impacts are not included in this FY 2026 workforce plan.

SECTION 1
UNDERSTANDING THE AVS WORKFORCE

This section of the plan describes AVS's staffing categories, organizational structure, and occupations that enable mission-critical execution.

Staffing Categories

The AVS Operations-funded, full-time permanent workforce falls into three broad categories: safety critical, safety technical, and operational support. ASIs and ASEs comprise 64 percent of the AVS workforce and 87 percent of the Safety Critical category.

1. Safety Critical Staff

The safety critical AVS staffing category (73 percent of the AVS Operations-funded workforce) includes positions where duties have a direct operational impact on the AVS safety mission. The responsibilities of such members include, but are not limited to:

- Monitoring and enforcing industry compliance with safety regulations through inspections, data analysis, and risk management;
- Certifying aviation personnel, airlines, repair stations, training centers, and other aviation entities;
- Issuing and overseeing design approvals, production approvals, and airworthiness certificates, and executing continued operational safety processes for aircraft, aircraft alterations, equipment, and avionics;
- Investigating aviation accidents and incidents;
- Monitoring and enforcing industry compliance with drug and alcohol testing regulations through inspections, investigations, and surveillance;
- Overseeing and monitoring AVS delegation programs; and
- Overseeing and monitoring new entrant integration into the NAS.

2. Safety Technical Staff

The safety technical staffing category (15 percent of the AVS Operations-funded workforce) describes those positions providing specialized support to enable safety critical staff to perform their jobs efficiently and effectively. This category includes functions requiring specialized skills, knowledge, and advanced training, such as operations research, data science, analytics, computer science, aviation systems expertise, statistics, chemistry, health technicians, and foreign affairs. These responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Evaluating and analyzing the effectiveness of existing AVS certification, regulatory, and compliance processes;
- Developing new programs, activities, and methods for improved oversight and enhanced industry safety;

- Defining, managing, and applying research that informs regulations, policy, standards, and procedures for safe operations;
- Designing, developing, and delivering technical training curricula for the workforce;
- Managing the airman and aircraft registries, and the airman and air traffic controller medical certification system; and
- Guiding the development and publication of FAA safety regulations through the rulemaking process.

3. Operational Support Staff

The operational support staffing category describes those positions providing support for the safety critical and safety technical staff—delineating between safety professional positions providing expert-specific support, and administrative and clerical positions which round out this category:

» Safety Professional Staff

The safety professional staff (7 percent of the AVS Operations-funded workforce) are safety critical and safety technical staff enablers and force multipliers generating a synergistic effect for the entire workforce. This sub-category includes those professional positions that provide technical expertise, professional guidance, expert advice, and specialist assistance in areas such as finance and budget management, international outreach, communications, people management, business planning, and project management.

» Safety Support Staff

The safety support staffing category (5 percent of the AVS Operations-funded workforce) comprises positions providing administrative and clerical support to ensure the smooth daily functioning of the AVS organization.

Organizational Structure

The AVS Oversight and Certification Organization is structured into business units called services and offices with physical locations in the United States and internationally. An Executive Director, or equivalent head, leads each service and office. The Executive Directors and their respective deputies make up the AVS Management Team which is led by the Associate Administrator for Aviation Safety.

Principal Services/Offices

FS Flight Standards Service

AIR Aircraft Certification Service

AAM Office of Aerospace Medicine

Occupational Series Within the AVS Workforce

This section describes the occupational series that comprise the majority of the AVS workforce. An occupational series is a subdivision of an occupational group or job family consisting of positions similar to a specialized line of work and qualification requirements. The two largest occupational series within AVS are ASI and ASE, which together account for approximately two-thirds of all AVS positions.

» Aviation Safety Inspector

An ASI is responsible for the certification and surveillance of air carriers, general aviation, aircraft product and part manufacturers, and air operators in accordance with title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). Major ASI responsibilities include administering, investigating, and enforcing safety regulations and standards for the production, operation, maintenance, and modification of aircraft. ASIs work in six specialty areas: manufacturing, maintenance, operations, avionics, dispatch, and cabin safety.

» Aviation Safety Engineer

An ASE is responsible for applying engineering knowledge and experience in specific disciplines such as airframes, systems and equipment, propulsion, and flight tests. Major ASE responsibilities include administering safety standards for the design and certification of aeronautical products; evaluating designs for compliance with safety regulations and standards; and ensuring the continued operational safety of aircraft, engines, and propellers.

SECTION 2
ADVANCING THE SAFETY MISSION

One Mission, Many Contributors

The AVS statutory mission is to provide the safest, most efficient aerospace system in the world through a data-driven, risk-based systems approach for standards, certification, and oversight. The scope of responsibilities required to keep the NAS operating safely and efficiently requires AVS to be at the forefront of aerospace technology and human factors.

This section describes some of the many tools that AVS employs to help keep the NAS operating safely, including:

» Data-Driven Risk-Based Decision-Making (RBDM)

is the use of safety and performance data to assess safety risk and existing safety risk controls. AVS leverages leading commercial software platforms to make data-driven decisions with enhanced data ecosystems that empower users, collaboration, and compounds value.

» Safety Management System (SMS)

is a formal, top-down, AVS organization-wide approach to managing safety risk and assuring the effectiveness of safety risk controls. It includes systematic procedures, practices, and policies for the management of safety risk. SMS consists of four primary components covering Safety Policy, Safety Risk Management, Safety Assurance, and Safety Promotion.

» The Compliance Program

is a risk-based approach to ensure the industry maintains compliance with regulations by identifying and mitigating problems. The Compliance Program focuses on using the most effective means to fix problems before they cause an accident or serious incident. While recognizing that most operators or manufacturers voluntarily comply with the core principles of safety, the Compliance Program regards intentional noncompliance as the greatest safety risk, which requires strong enforcement.

» Information Sharing Programs

such as the Aviation Safety Information Analysis and Sharing (ASIAS) system and AIR's Product Data Analytics platform, leverage data and information sources across government and industry, including voluntarily provided safety data, to monitor known risks, evaluate the effectiveness of deployed mitigations, and detect emerging risks. Collaboration with union partners is a critical component of the success of voluntary safety information sharing and safety.

» Systems Modernization

ensures FAA systems keep pace with technological advancements, enabling the FAA's infrastructure and processes to remain up to date and capable of handling the demands of an evolving aerospace industry. System modernization involves upgrading legacy infrastructure while integrating advanced surveillance tools, case management technologies, and artificial intelligence (AI)-driven automation. By embracing these advancements, FAA can enhance the accuracy, capacity, and sustainability of the aerospace system.

» Government–Industry Cooperative Efforts,

such as the U.S. Aviation Safety Team (USAST)—comprising the Commercial Aviation Safety Team (CAST) and General Aviation Joint Safety Committee (GAJSC)—use integrated, data-driven strategies to reduce accidents and fatality risk. The success of these collaborative organizations is driven by the dedicated efforts of the respective members to adopt mitigations proactively to improve safety.

» International Cooperation and Collaboration

enhances safety by influencing regional and global alignment and increasing transparency, compatibility, and harmonization of various global approaches to aviation safety. International safety cooperation and collaboration rely on bilateral aviation safety agreements, technical training and workshops, and the International Aviation Safety Assessment oversight program, alongside a proactive leadership role in shaping the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

» Certification and Safety Oversight Reform

a foundational component of safety is the commitment to continuous improvement. FAA is driving greater transparency, collaboration, and accountability across the Agency with the entities it regulates. As part of this, FAA is committed to an integrated approach to implementing all the requirements of ACSAA, as well as the recommendations from investigations and independent reviews related to the Boeing B-737 MAX accidents, including the door-plug incident on January 5, 2024.

In the past fiscal year, FAA published Revision C to FAA Order 8100.15, Organization Designation Authorization Procedures. This significant update formally implements provisions required by ACSAA, including Section 107 requirements that strengthen FAA oversight of ODA unit members, and establishes clearer processes for identifying and addressing interference with the performance of authorized functions by ODA Unit Members.

AVS strives to uphold the Agency's safety standards through transparency and accountability, regardless of the challenges posed by our complex and dynamic aviation environment. Investing in skilled people and creating a safe and professional workplace ensures AVS can meet these challenges through a unified approach to managing risks and conducting oversight. FAA's passion for aviation safety is the driving force for all we do, with AVS services and offices working interdependently with each other and with external stakeholders toward a shared vision for delivering results for the AVS statutory safety mission.

Delivering Results

The numbers in Figure 1 illustrate the broad scope of AVS's work. Beyond the number of registered aircraft, active pilots, designees, airmen medical examinations, and companies with drug testing programs are tangible factors that enhance safety in our complex system. The scope of work depicted also extends to our international collaboration with the 193 Member States in ICAO.

Figure 1: The AVS purview across the aviation community, as depicted in numbers. Data is as of December 31, 2025.

The evolution of the aviation sector, marked by the expansion of emerging entrants in the advanced air mobility segment, the development of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) traffic management capabilities, the introduction of advanced air mobility technologies, the significant expansion of light-sport aircraft capabilities, and the need to understand and better utilize aviation safety data and AI, requires AVS to be agile in how we ensure the safety of the NAS.

Numerous examples from this past fiscal year showcase a varied and extensive array of achievements where AVS played a key role:

- AVS successfully managed the issuance of the final Special Federal Aviation Regulation (SFAR) on Integration of Powered-Lift: Pilot Certification and Operations; Miscellaneous Amendments Related to Rotorcraft and Airplanes. With the issuance of this final SFAR, the United States is prepared to introduce this new category of aircraft into the NAS safely and maintain its global leadership position in aviation innovation—as the first country with a comprehensive certification and operating framework.

- On July 24, 2025, FAA published the Modernization of Special Airworthiness Certification (MOSAIC) final rule in the Federal Register to amend rules for the design, manufacture, airworthiness certification, operation, maintenance, and alteration of light-sport category aircraft. The MOSAIC rulemaking was one of FAA's most complex projects, requiring AVS to adjudicate thousands of comments, revise approximately 100 regulatory sections, and obtain and incorporate executive decisions under an aggressive schedule. AVS successfully completed all milestones on or ahead of schedule. The rule fulfills Section 824 of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 and modernizes regulatory pathways to enhance safety, performance, and innovation within recreational aviation and stimulate growth in the manufacture of light-sport category aircraft and certification of airmen.

- To support an FAA priority to expand the means of training air traffic controllers beyond the FAA Academy, AVS researched and mitigated the safety risk to issue an exemption to practical skills requirements codified in 14 CFR 65. This exemption effectively expedites the entrance of controllers who meet all FAA certification standards into the workforce, while still upholding high safety standards. In partnership with ATO, AVS certified the FAA-examiners embedded within the Enhanced Air Traffic Collegiate Training Initiative Program to allow nine colleges to join these programs. These efforts helped boost staffing at over 500 FAA air traffic control facilities and FAA contract tower facilities across the NAS.

- AVS reduced the backlog of Airman Medical Certification applications pending consideration of a Special Issuance from over 12,300 to less than 5,000 during FY 2025, with that number continuing to drop in FY 2026. Concurrently, the average disposition time decreased from 166 days to 105 days at the end of FY 2025 and has continued to decrease in FY 2026, reaching 94 days as of December 1, 2025. In addition, AVS supported FAA in exceeding the air traffic control hiring goal for the tenth consecutive year by medically clearing applicants for Academy training placement.

- AVS successfully developed the online application system for the DOT/FAA electric Vertical Takeoff and Landing (eVTOL) Integration Pilot Program portal that was launched on September 12, 2025. AVS proposed at least eight pilot projects testing advanced air mobility across diverse environments and missions. This initiative will provide critical data to help FAA develop new safety frameworks and policy guidance for integrating advanced air mobility technologies into the NAS, advancing the future of aviation transportation.

- AVS completed and published the proposed rule for Normalizing Unmanned Aircraft Systems Beyond Visual Line of Sight Operations (parts 108 and 146). This proposed rule would establish a regulatory framework for operating lower-altitude unmanned aircraft beyond visual line of sight and for FAA to regulate and certify automated data services used by unmanned aircraft to meet regulatory requirements or enhance the safety of UAS operations. The combination of these two proposed rules would eliminate the need for the majority of today's waiver or exemption petitions and grants or issuances.

- AVS effectively implemented the USAST framework, integrating CAST, GAJSC, the Drone Safety Team, and the U.S. Helicopter Safety Team with the ASIAS system, leveraging a newly developed Aerospace National Safety Issue Registry to strengthen the national safety issue registry through data-driven collaboration and unified governance. The centralized structure improved transparency and enabled 24/7 access to shared safety intelligence, predictive analytics, and expert safety risk management teams to identify, prioritize, and mitigate systemic risks rapidly.

- AVS ensured that organizational processes and resources enabled rapid, effective responses to aircraft accidents, achieving 100 percent compliance with ICAO Annex 13. AVS led the coordinated collaboration with the National Transportation Safety Board and other U.S. government entities, foreign authorities, and the aviation industry, including representing FAA interests during the Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA) midair collision investigation and public hearing. AVS maintained mission focus despite increased operational tempo, implementing interim risk mitigations and contributing to data-driven safety recommendations that will help prevent similar events.

- Following the January 2025 DCA midair collision, the AVS Office of Accident Investigation and Prevention supported and informed regulatory, operational, and policy actions addressing collision risk where military helicopter operations and commercial aviation intersect. In addition, AVS led a Safety Issue Action Team on Helicopter Routes Near Congested Airports, a systemwide review of comparable airspace configurations across the United States, strengthening enterprise hazard identification, prioritization, and safety risk management.

- AVS actively worked to further FAA's interest in reducing the General Aviation Fatal Accident Rate to no more than 0.92 fatal accidents per 100,000 flight hours for FY 2025. AVS worked with GAJSC to prioritize reducing the number of fatal accidents by targeting safety risks based on activity and focusing on the implementation of safety enhancements. AVS and GAJSC also targeted data-driven mitigations aimed at the contributing factors found in fatal general aviation accidents in the U.S. to achieve higher levels of safety.

SECTION 3
FORECASTING AVS WORKFORCE NEEDS

Since ASIs and ASEs constitute 87 percent of the AVS safety critical staffing category, forecasting and modeling concentrate on assessing the requirements for these positions. The AVS staffing model, in conjunction with more targeted assessments by each organization, assists FAA in identifying staffing requirements for ASIs and ASEs.

The workforce continues to evolve as advances are made in the aviation safety environment. Using and improving established methods of workforce forecasting and modeling will ensure we continue to meet our obligations to promote and improve safety in the NAS.

AVS Staffing Analytics

AVS uses a data-driven model to perform the initial analysis of our staffing needs. The model comprises specialized modules that assess ASI and ASE staffing requirements within AVS. The model uses data inputs, such as historical work activities and work hours, as a baseline for future staffing requirements. AVS continues efforts to improve the staffing tool to position the model better for the future.

Data Quality

As with any software tool, the quality of analytical output is only as good as the data input. Several processes are completed to ensure quality data:

- Identify and review actual working time for various ASI and ASE activities;
- Categorize activities;
- Identify and quantify the potential change in activities associated with staffing increases or shortfalls;
- Examine the relationship between activity categories and industry growth;
- Research training times for employees at different experience levels;
- Compare workload recorded in various oversight applications (i.e., the Safety Assurance System);
- Examine the year-over-year change in time spent per activity and estimate future workload;
- Quantify and project all work hours, including those spent on training, administrative activities, leave, and travel; and
- Examine the workload impact associated with designee oversight.

Historical Work Activities and Work Hours

The staffing tool modules all share the same general structure. Activities and work hours are classified and quantified by work type. The average time per activity—referred to as the nominal time—is calculated annually by using hours recorded in the FAA Labor Distribution and Reporting system and other appropriate oversight activity-tracking systems.

Forecasting

The number of activities forecasted for the next 10 years is based on their relationship to drivers of demand. Where possible and applicable, FAA-produced forecasts are used to predict workload changes associated with industry growth. These forecasts are combined with field-level knowledge of expected workload changes.

The required modeled workforce is then calculated by multiplying the nominal time per activity by the number of forecasted activities for each year for 10 years. The model determines the staffing levels that will be required if the same level of effort needed to support current activities is forecasted based on the growth or contraction of the current industry. The model results are reviewed and adjusted, if necessary, based on subject-matter expertise to account for growing segments of industry, such as drones, and the implementation of new automation applications.

SECTION 4
LOOKING FORWARD

AVS fosters the right balance between operating efficiently, meeting its strategic priorities, and consistently delivering high-quality products and services while effectively managing resources. Several key drivers will continue to shape the AVS workforce over the next decade.

Rapid technological advancements, the emergence of new types of aerospace operations, the constant evolution of the regulatory landscape, the growth of the aerospace industry itself, and latent system risks are compelling us to assess continuously where expertise is needed. This continuous assessment enables AVS to evolve into a more innovative, focused, and adaptable organization that can tackle the challenges of the future.

AVS must keep up with the rapidly unfolding technological advancements in aviation. The introduction of advanced materials for aircraft structures, systems, alternate fuels, airports, and airspace; the integration of innovative electric and hybrid systems; and the impact of AI, machine learning, neural networks, and machine vision all pose staffing challenges that AVS must address. These dynamic drivers of change necessitate advanced expertise in both legacy and new concepts in engineering, mathematics, science, and safety management.

The aviation sector is undergoing significant transformation as regulatory frameworks adapt to advancements in technology and expanding operational capabilities. The MOSAIC rule exemplifies this shift, modernizing the light-sport aircraft regulatory framework by expanding aircraft performance envelopes, increasing design flexibility, and updating pathways for certification, maintenance, and operational safety. As a result, there is an increased demand for ASIs and ASEs skilled in aircraft systems, structures, propulsion, avionics, and pilot certification. To manage the expanded capabilities and broader eligibility criteria within the light-sport category, AVS workforce planning ensures adequate inspector and engineering capacity to support new certification activities, surveillance, and oversight of maintenance and operational practices.

The implementation of 14 CFR part 108 will establish a comprehensive regulatory framework for routine commercial UAS operations beyond visual line of sight. This rule will facilitate scalable operations under standardized requirements, supporting growth in sectors such as infrastructure inspection, agriculture, logistics, and emergency response. Part 108 will introduce new oversight responsibilities for AVS in certification, operational approval, compliance, and enforcement, necessitating specialized expertise in automation, software assurance, and data-enabled oversight tools.

AVS in conjunction with the newly established Advanced Aviation Technologies (AAT) organization is also strengthening its oversight of emerging UAS operations by expanding FAA's network of designated UAS test sites. With the addition of new test sites in FY 2026, FAA is increasing national capacity to conduct risk-based testing, validate operational concepts, and generate the data needed to support regulatory initiatives such as the proposed part 108 BVLOS rule and expanded operations under 49 U.S.C. 44803. These enhancements will enable AVS to accelerate integration of drones and advanced air mobility into the NAS through repeatable, scalable operational concepts.

Looking ahead, the maturation of UAS Traffic Management capabilities will further transform aviation safety oversight, requiring AVS to expand expertise in systems engineering, cybersecurity, and data analytics. Workforce planning efforts are thus focused on both current regulatory implementation and future capability development, ensuring AVS remains equipped to oversee increasingly automated and interconnected aviation systems as UAS operations become a fully integrated component of the NAS.

To address these anticipated workforce needs, AVS forecasts staffing needs, estimated levels of attrition, and planned hiring over the next 10 years (FY 2026 to FY 2035). Figures 2 and 3 present detailed views of forecasted ASIs and ASEs.

ASI[2] Forecast with Planned Hires and Estimated Losses

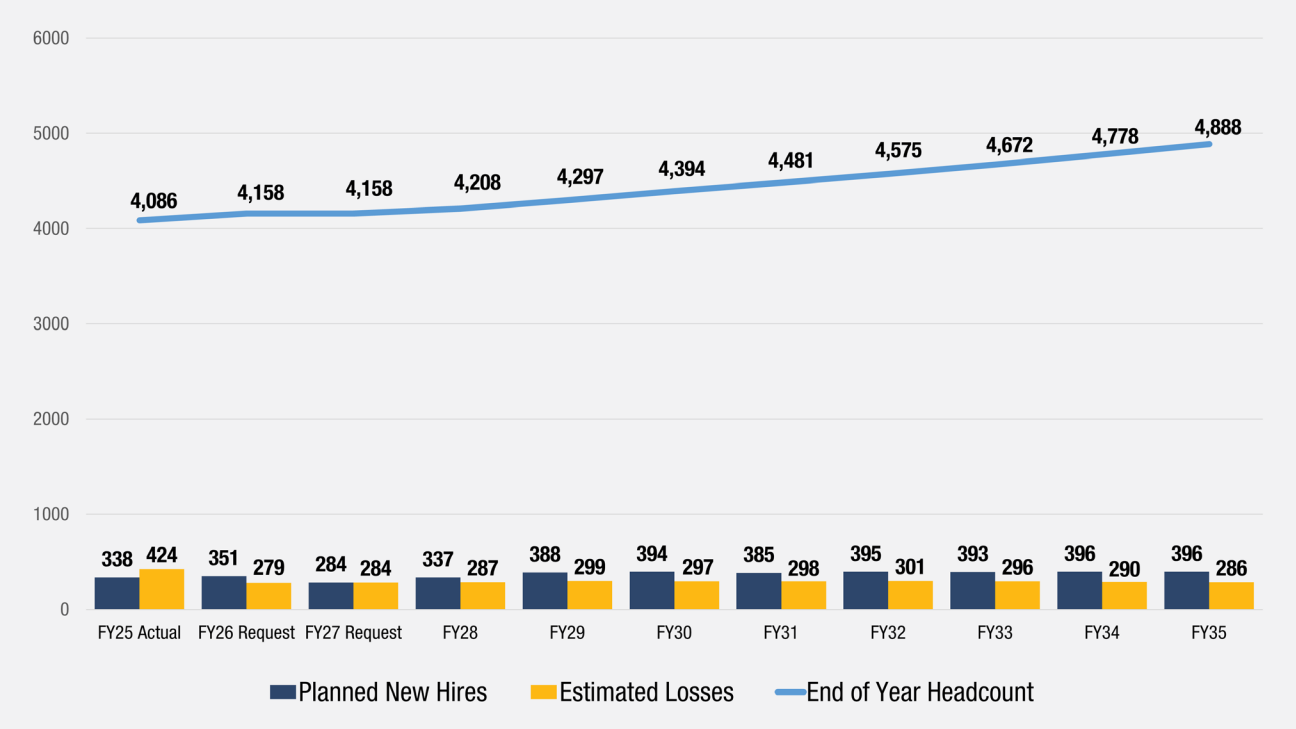


Figure 2: FY 2025 actual staffing level, actual hires, and actual losses, as well as planned staffing levels, planned hires, and estimated losses for FY 2026 through FY 2035 for ASIs (1825 occupational series) in FS and AIR

[2] There may be nominal count adjustments associated with the Agency realignment

ASIs and ASEs are in high demand, making for a challenging hiring environment. In FY 2025, AVS hired 338 and lost 424 ASIs, respectively, resulting in a declining ASI headcount year over year. In FY 2026, AVS plans to continue to hire aggressively (351 ASIs) while maintaining historical attrition rates (292 ASI average attrition predicted over the 10-year forecast period).

Planned ASE hiring in FY 2026 is also higher than FY 2025 levels, increasing from 60 ASEs in FY 2025 to 90 in FY 2026 (50 percent increase). Hiring is lower in later years, averaging 75 ASEs over the 10-year period. Attrition, like ASIs, is predicted to remain at historical levels and average 66 ASEs over the same 10-year period.

ASE[3] Forecast with Planned Hires and Estimated Losses

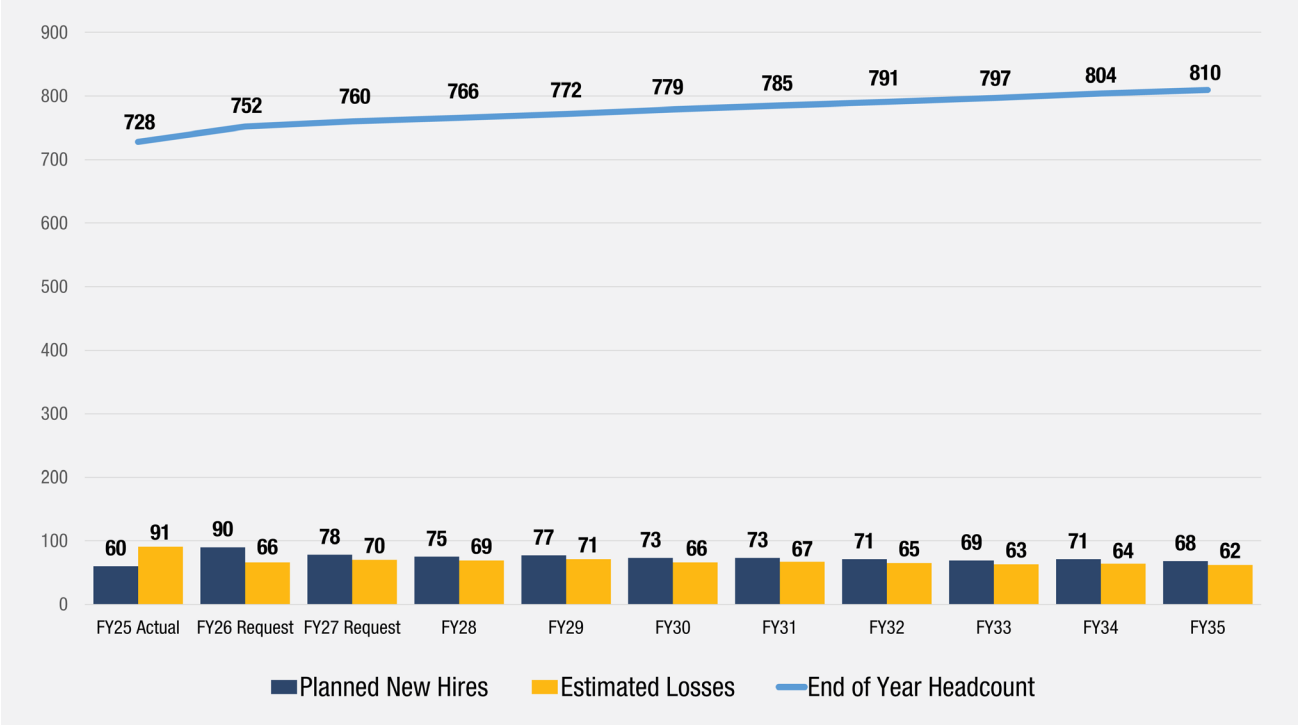


Figure 3: FY 2025 actual staffing level, actual hires, and actual losses, as well as planned staffing levels, planned hires, and estimated losses for FY 2026 through FY 2035 for ASEs (800 occupational series) in AIR

[3] There may be nominal count adjustments associated with the Agency realignment

A further breakdown of non-supervisory ASIs by functional area is provided in Table 1.

Non-Supervisory ASIs by Functional Area	FY 2025 Actuals on Board	FY 2026 Forecast	FY 2027 Forecast
General Aviation Safety Assurance	1,616	1,665	1,640
Air Carrier Safety Assurance	980	1,021	1,010
Other Manufacturing	194	223	249
Large Transport Manufacturing	57	53	53

Table 1: The number of non-supervisory ASIs by functional area, comparing the actuals on board at the end of FY 2025 to the modeled staffing projections for FY 2026 and FY 2027

Recruiting and Retaining a Skilled Workforce

AVS requires a skilled workforce to deliver on the AVS mission. The ASIs and ASEs, who make up the majority of the AVS workforce, must have significant experience to meet the qualification standards.

As a result of workforce needs, the average age of AVS employees when hired is 46, and the current average age of AVS employees is 54. There is no mandatory retirement age for AVS employees. Attrition analysis shows that employees do not retire immediately upon becoming eligible; rather, the likelihood of retiring is spread relatively evenly over multiple years. Though FAA desires to retain employees who satisfactorily perform mission-critical work, regardless of their age, over the last two fiscal years, the average age at retirement for safety critical AVS personnel was 66. Figure 4 shows the historical rates of retirement with respect to the year of eligibility.

ASI and ASE Retirement Behavior Profile

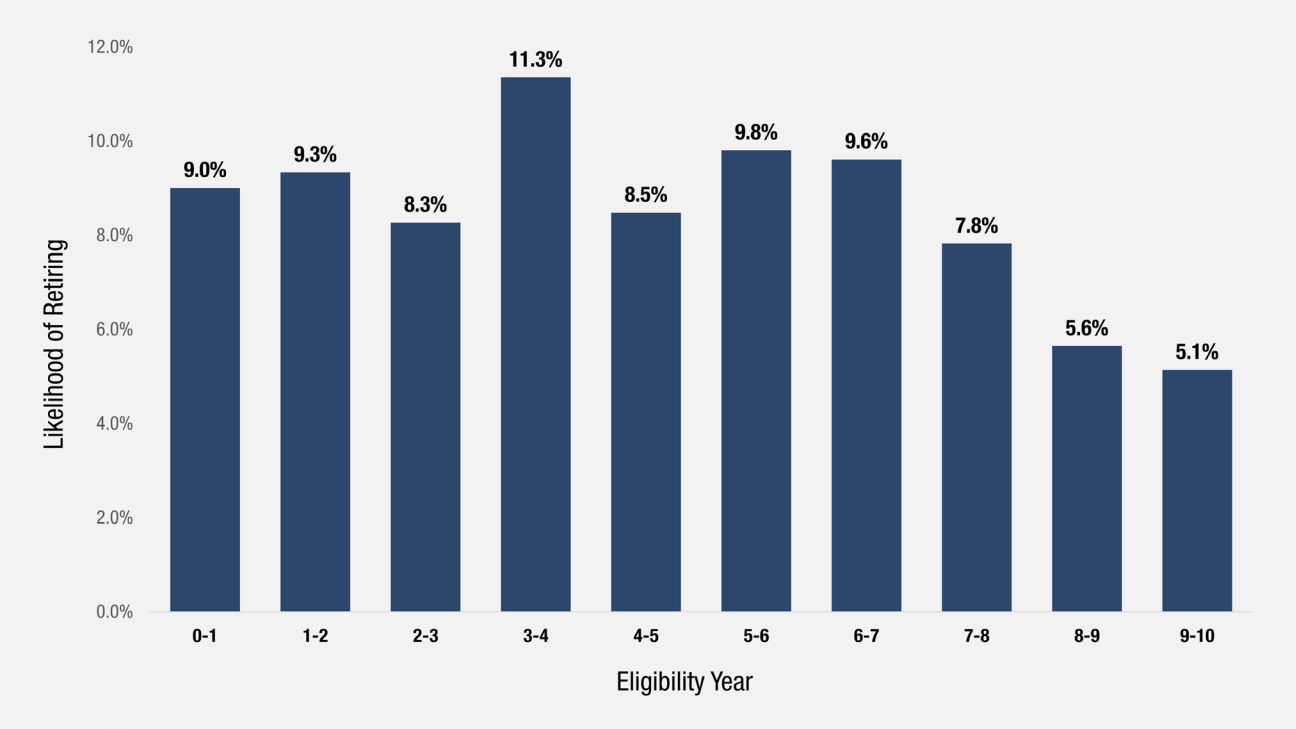


Figure 4: Forecasted percentage of ASIs and ASEs employees expected to retire during each year of retirement eligibility

In FY 2026, AVS will leverage knowledge gained through Federal best practices for workforce development by assessing talent readiness, career desire, and development gaps while mitigating the potential loss of talent and experience. AVS continues to focus on building and maintaining a pipeline of skilled employees, trained and prepared to take on increasing responsibility using recruitment, retention, and development initiatives, as detailed in the following sections.

Recruitment and Outreach

AVS must compete with private industry and other government agencies to recruit and retain experts from a specialized talent pool. FAA recognizes the ongoing challenge of identifying and attracting talent into key safety positions and is pursuing a number of initiatives, activities, and incentives to do so.

Currently, the primary recruitment and hiring vehicle AVS uses is the Office of Personnel Management's automated hiring system, USAJOBS. In addition, FAA's recruitment efforts to attract experienced inspectors, engineers, and medical officers include promoting the AVS hiring incentives and flexibilities—including On-the-Spot (OTS) hiring authority and relocation incentives—at professional conferences, career fairs, aviation events, and airshows. Another avenue is the use of social media. Both practices are used to reach a greater pool of experienced applicants nationwide.

In FY 2025, AVS gained approval to fill ASI and general inspection, investigation, enforcement, and compliance positions using OTS hiring authority. These positions meet the needs of mission and safety-critical operations that fill roles essential to the enforcement of aviation safety standards.

Over the last fiscal year, AVS participated in 30 in-person and virtual recruitment events reaching 1,700 potential candidates to support the hiring of safety critical and safety technical positions, spanning all levels of required experience, with candidates at varying levels of their professional careers.

AVS continues to use the FAA's Managerial and Employee Leadership Competency Profiles to correlate and define the required core competencies AVS needs for interpersonal, business, and specific technical skills. This model allows us to compare the competencies of employees against the requirements of positions across AVS.

Retention

We strive to be a workplace of choice to ensure that AVS retains talented employees. AVS will continue to promote a professional and safe work culture that encourages innovation, empowerment, and growth.

AVS senior leaders actively embrace their roles by promoting employee engagement through numerous interactions, education, and advancement opportunities, and idea and knowledge-sharing efforts that join pertinent information with employee engagement.

Compensation Incentives

To better compete with aviation industry recruitment, AVS offers several incentives, such as leave enhancements (included in job announcements), new hire pay flexibilities, and degree completion programs, such as:

- A $10,000 Permanent Change of Station (with a one-year service agreement) to airworthiness ASI applicants moving more than 100 miles to their new duty location who accept hard-to-fill positions. Hard-to-fill positions are those that have taken longer than six months to fill from the date the vacant position was identified and approved.
- A $10,000 Permanent Change of Station (with a one-year service agreement) to all Operations ASI applicants moving more than 100 miles to their new duty location, as well as higher entry-level employee salaries (Step 5 within the qualified grade level).
- A $25,000 recruitment incentive (with a three-year service agreement) for ASI applicants within the Air Carrier Operations and General Aviation Operations specialties at grades FG-9/11/12 who are filling positions at hard-to-fill locations.

AVS continues to evaluate the use of incentives for other high-demand skill sets needed for mission-critical positions.

Workforce Training and Development

AVS regularly assesses the skills and competencies we rely on to meet future needs, and where necessary, AVS locates or develops requisite staff and training resources. Understanding FAA's role as a regulator to manage risk and provide safety oversight, AVS encourages professional development opportunities and provides employees with training. AVS training includes synchronous web-based virtual learning, where students and instructors are present at the same time; asynchronous web-based training, which is self-paced; and traditional classroom-based instruction.

Initial Technical Training

Training provided to new ASIs/ASEs varies across the different services and offices and ranges from one to 15 weeks, depending on specialty. AVS requires all new staff to attend onboarding training to introduce and familiarize employees with the AVS statutory safety mission and values.

Additional/Recurrent Technical Training

After employees complete the initial technical courses, AVS identifies additional training needs during annual calls for training requirements. These requirements are role-based and focused on competency. Supervisors work with their employees to determine what kind of training the

employees need and when they need it. Inspectors, designee advisors, and flight test pilots are required to receive initial and recurrent training tailored to their particular job responsibilities.

Supervisors and their employees continually review training requirements to keep pace with changes in the aviation industry.

Funding

Despite ongoing innovative efforts, staffing remains the AVS organization's largest cost. Though personnel compensation and benefits consumed 83.2 percent of the AVS FY 2025 actual expenditure, continuing to support these costs—while exploring ways to reduce them—will be critical to the long-term sustainability of operations and ensuring the safety of the NAS.

AVS requires specialized training and equipment as well as supplies, travel, and other non-payroll funding to perform the organization's statutory safety mission effectively. AVS needs to maintain an agile workforce that is not geographically constrained; is reliant on tools, equipment, and technology to operate in dispersed work areas; and is both trained and equipped to carry out the organization's statutory safety mission.

Personnel Compensation and Benefits (PC&B) and Non-PC&B Shares

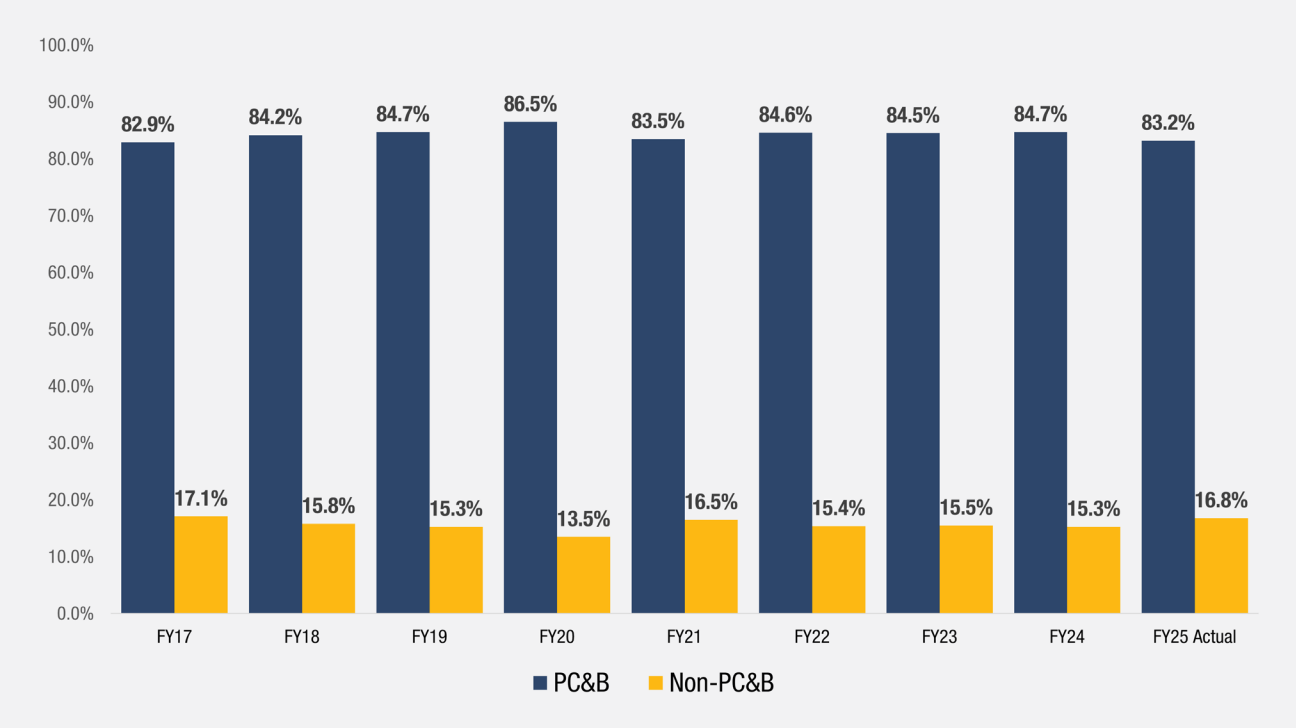


Figure 5: Percentage allotments for PC&B, FY 2017 – FY 2025

AVS Strategy for Effective Use of Resources

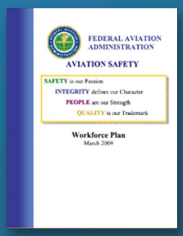
Maintaining staffing levels with skilled and experienced personnel who have completed all onboarding training and are positioned to deliver effectively against job requirements is a delicate balance of sustaining a primed pipeline while anticipating attrition. Many positions require prior experience and ongoing training and education to stay current with advancing technologies. Our commitment to detecting and addressing the shifting demands of the aviation safety system efficiently requires a strategic approach to managing our staffing numbers across the AVS enterprise.

To manage these dynamics effectively, AVS applies risk-based analysis and data-driven decision-making to align workforce resources with statutory, mission-critical priorities. In addition, AVS is working to evolve workforce modeling to enable sensitivity analysis across a greater breadth of variables, allowing for improved strategic planning.

These workforce management considerations are further shaped by external labor market conditions. Continued growth in air travel demand, combined with increasing hiring pressure from emerging aviation sectors such as advanced air mobility, has created a highly competitive environment for aviation and engineering talent. These conditions are expected to persist and influence the pace at which AVS can recruit, develop, and retain personnel with specialized technical expertise.

At the same time, AVS oversight responsibilities continue to expand as regulatory frameworks modernize, and new operational models are integrated into routine aviation activity. Key developments such as the implementation of the MOSAIC rule—including the significant expansion of light-sport aircraft capabilities, the establishment of a comprehensive regulatory framework for commercial unmanned aircraft operations under 14 CFR part 108, and the advancement toward scalable UAS traffic management and routine commercial drone operations demand increased specialized expertise. This includes skills in systems safety, software assurance, automation, data-enabled oversight, manufacturing and maintenance surveillance, and risk-based certification.

AVS workforce planning must therefore address both immediate regulatory implementation and long-term capability development, recognizing the need to recruit, train, and qualify personnel for increasingly complex and automated aviation operations. Proactive, data-driven workforce planning will ensure AVS is equipped to meet statutory requirements, adapt to technological changes, and continue delivering the highest level of aviation safety.



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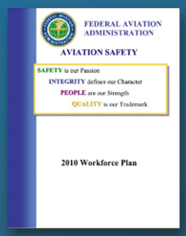

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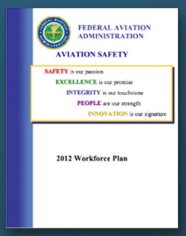

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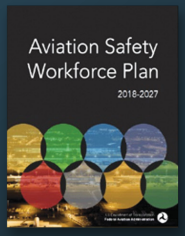

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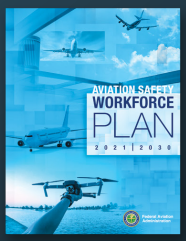

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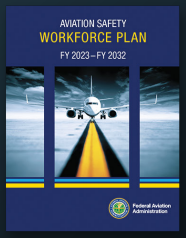

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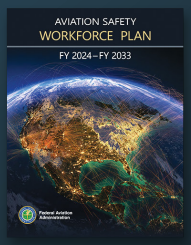

FY 2024

FY 2025

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