Federal Aviation Administration

AVIATION SAFETY WORKFORCE PLAN

FY 2025 – FY 2034

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Executive Summary

The Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA; Agency) annual Aviation Safety (AVS) Workforce Plan outlines the staffing plan for existing and future personnel in AVS. The Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 issue of the AVS Workforce Plan focuses on those mission-critical occupations directly impacting public safety.

The AVS Workforce Plan is divided into four sections. The first section provides a description of the AVS workforce, delineating between mission-critical occupations for Public Safety and mission-support safety-critical enablers. 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 2025 and FY 2034. The fourth section explores the challenges of attracting qualified talent while competing with industry to hire from a shared pool of candidates. The plan further describes initiatives to recruit, develop, maintain, and retain mission-critical technical experts directly impacting public safety.

In response to the January 2024 door plug incident on Alaska Airlines Flight 1282, the FAA took several actions including increasing our Aviation Safety Inspector (ASI) staffing to enable increased on-site presence at manufacturing and production sites, increasing product audit frequency and targeted surveillance activity, and embedding ASIs within various manufacturing and production activities to provide early feedback on initiatives and monitor progress. The FAA also established frequent, recurring meetings amongst senior leadership to review Boeing's progress, challenges, and issues, and established a standard set of metrics that are reviewed at regular intervals for monitoring the health of Boeing's production and quality systems. The FAA continues to actively monitor and support Boeing's progress on Safety Management System (SMS) implementation, as required by the new part 5 SMS rule, and the recommendations from the Aircraft Certification, Safety, and Accountability Act (ACSAA), 2020 (Public Law [Pub. L.] 116-260), Section 103 Expert Panel.

While the general aviation accident rate continues to decrease, recent aviation incidents—one of which is the country's deadliest aviation incident since 2001 and included a major commercial air carrier—are a stark reminder of the enormity of the FAA's safety mission. AVS is dedicated to continuously improving safety and efficiency in line with the FAA's mission to provide the safest and most efficient airspace system in the world.

Introduction to the AVS Workforce Plan

To meet the requirements of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 (Pub. L. 118-42), the FAA prepared this 18th annual update to the AVS Workforce Plan. This plan includes information of interest to key external stakeholders, such as the congressional Authorization and Appropriations Committees and the White House. It includes staffing estimates for ASIs and Aviation Safety Engineers (ASEs), which comprise 65 percent of the AVS workforce and 92 percent of AVS Public Safety staff. This FY 2025 report accounts for aircraft fleet changes; operations forecasts; inspector and engineer attrition; and other factors.

As of September 2024[1], AVS had approximately 7,700 professionals who make up the AVS workforce and contribute to ensuring the National Airspace System (NAS) remains the safest in the world. The NAS is the world's most complex airspace, encompassing commercial and general aviation, as well as the expanding drone and commercial space launch sectors.

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.

This Workforce Plan is designed to strengthen the recruitment, training, and professional development of mission-critical activities in AVS. 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 the NAS.

[1]Full-time Permanent, Operations Funded positions as of Pay Period 20 ending on September 21, 2024.

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 workforce is comprised of Public Safety and Mission Support staff.

1. Public Safety Staff

The Public Safety staffing category (70 percent of the AVS Operations workforce) includes key positions where the duties have a direct operational impact on public safety. While ASIs and ASEs comprise 92 percent of this category and are the focus of this workforce plan, other critical positions—medical examiners, for example—while smaller in number, also play a critical role in keeping the public safe.

The responsibilities of Public Safety staff 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;
- Overseeing the FAA Air Traffic Organization (ATO) SMS;
- Overseeing and monitoring AVS delegation programs; and
- Overseeing and monitoring new entrant integration into the NAS.

2. Mission Support Staff

Mission Support staff (30 percent of the AVS Operations workforce) provide specialized support to enable Public Safety staff to perform their jobs efficiently and effectively. Mission Support staff are essentially safety-critical staff enablers and force-multipliers that generate outsized effects of the staffed workforce. 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, foreign affairs, and economists. It also includes professional positions that provide expert-specific support, including technical expertise, professional guidance, expert advice, and specialist assistance in areas such as research, finance and budget management, international outreach, communications, people management, business planning, and project management. Administrative and clerical positions round out this category.

Organizational Structure

The AVS organization, one of the five FAA lines of business, 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. The AVS Management Team is led by the Associate Administrator for Aviation Safety.

Services

- Aircraft Certification (AIR)
- Air Traffic Safety Oversight (AOV)
- Flight Standards (FS)

Offices

- Aerospace Medicine (AAM)
- Quality, Integration, and Executive Services (AQS)
- Rulemaking (ARM)
- Unmanned Aircraft Systems Integration (AUS)
- Accident Investigation and Prevention (AVP)
- Organization Designation Authorization (ODA)

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 public safety occupational series within AVS are ASI and ASE.

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 all aircraft flying today. ASIs work in four specialty areas: avionics, manufacturing, maintenance, and operations.

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.

AVS employs many tools to help keep the NAS operating safely, including:

Data-Driven Risk-Based Decision-Making

employs the active use of safety and performance data using methods to assess safety risk and existing safety performance controls. AVS also leverages leading commercial software platforms for data-driven operations and decision-making and enhancing data ecosystems that empower users, collaboration, and compound value.

Safety Management System (SMS)

is a formal, top-down, 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 industry maintains compliance with regulations by proactively 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 proactive, strong enforcement.

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. It involves upgrading and enhancing legacy systems, infrastructure, integrating advanced surveillance tools, case management technologies, and leveraging automation, as well as artificial intelligence. By embracing these advancements, the FAA can enhance the accuracy, capacity, and sustainability of the aerospace system.

Information Sharing Programs,

such as the Aviation Safety Information Analysis and Sharing 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 to the success of voluntary safety information sharing and safety.

Government–Industry Cooperative Efforts,

such as the Commercial Aviation Safety Team and General Aviation Joint Safety Committee, 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 proactively adopt mitigations 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 cooperation and collaboration include mechanisms such as the effective use of bilateral aviation safety agreements, technical assistance, and provision of training and workshops, as well as taking an influential role in the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

Certification and Safety Oversight Reform

A foundational component of safety is the commitment to continuous improvement. The FAA is driving greater transparency, collaboration, and accountability across the Agency with its regulated parties. As part of this, the 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 737 MAX accidents, including the door-plug incident on January 5, 2024.

In the past year, the FAA satisfied several requirements of ACSAA, including issuing an update to the systems safety rule for transport category aircraft, publishing a final rule that requires a SMS for design and manufacturing organizations, Part 135 operators, and Air Tour Operators, and receiving and acting on findings and recommendations included in the Section 103 ODA Expert Panel final report.

In addition, the ODA Office chartered an Interference Review Team, which includes representatives from ODA, AIR, and FS, to review allegations of interference with the performance of authorized functions by ODA Unit Members. This team will ensure a consistent application of the Interference Notice requirements across AVS, and feedback from the team's review will inform future outreach to ODA holders and future policy changes.

Conclusion

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. The 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.

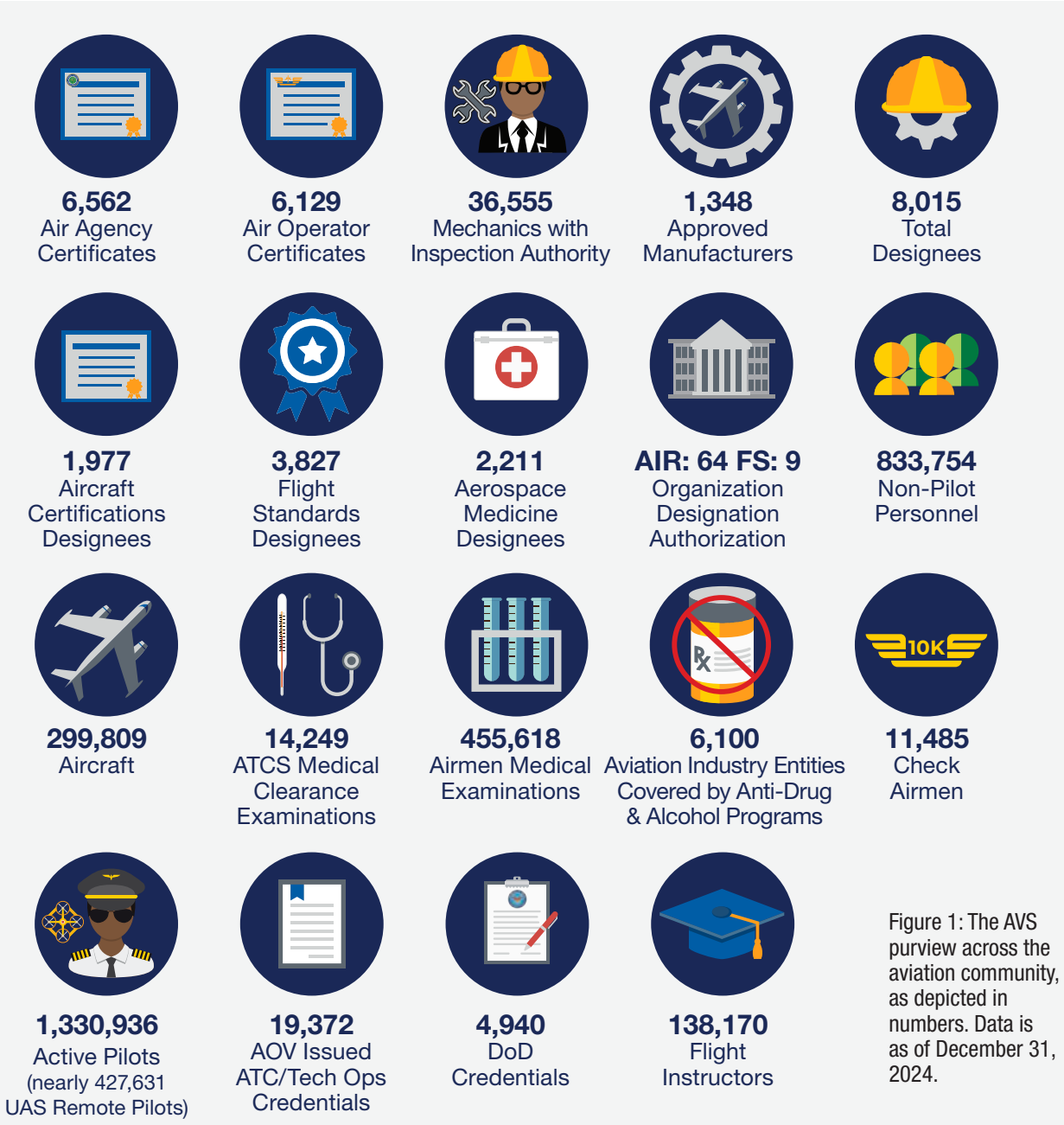


Figure 1: The AVS purview across the aviation community, as depicted in numbers. Data is as of December 31, 2024.

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 effectively deliver against job requirements is a delicate balance of sustaining a primed pipeline while anticipating attrition. Our commitment to efficiently detecting and addressing the shifting demands of the aviation safety system requires a strategic approach to managing our staffing numbers across the AVS enterprise.

AVS uses risk-based analysis and decision-making to direct resources to statutory mission-critical needs. In addition, AVS is working to evolve workforce modeling to enable sensitivity analysis across a greater breadth of variables, allowing for improved strategic planning.

SECTION 3
FORECASTING AVS WORKFORCE NEEDS

ASIs and ASEs constitute 65 percent of the positions within AVS. As a result, 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 the FAA in identifying staffing requirements for ASIs, ASEs, and medical staff.

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 is comprised of 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 better position the model for the future.

Data Quality

As with any software tool, the quality of analytical output is only as good as the data input. AVS has applied significant effort to improve the data quality of workload and work-hour tracking systems. With improved data, analysts have been able to:

- 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 ten 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 ten 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.

The resurgence of the travel industry, further exacerbated by hiring in the rapidly growing advanced air mobility segment of the aviation industry, continues to sustain a highly competitive environment for talent acquisition for aviation organizations, including AVS. It is reasonable to expect such hiring pressures to continue in the coming years, thus presenting AVS with more challenges in hiring technical experts.

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 continuously assess where expertise is needed. This enables AVS to mature 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 artificial intelligence, 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.

To address these anticipated workforce needs, AVS forecasts staffing needs, estimated levels of attrition, and planned hiring over the next ten years (FY 2025 to FY 2034). Figures 2 and 3 present detailed views of forecasted ASIs and ASEs.

ASI[2] Forecast with Planned Hires and Estimated Losses

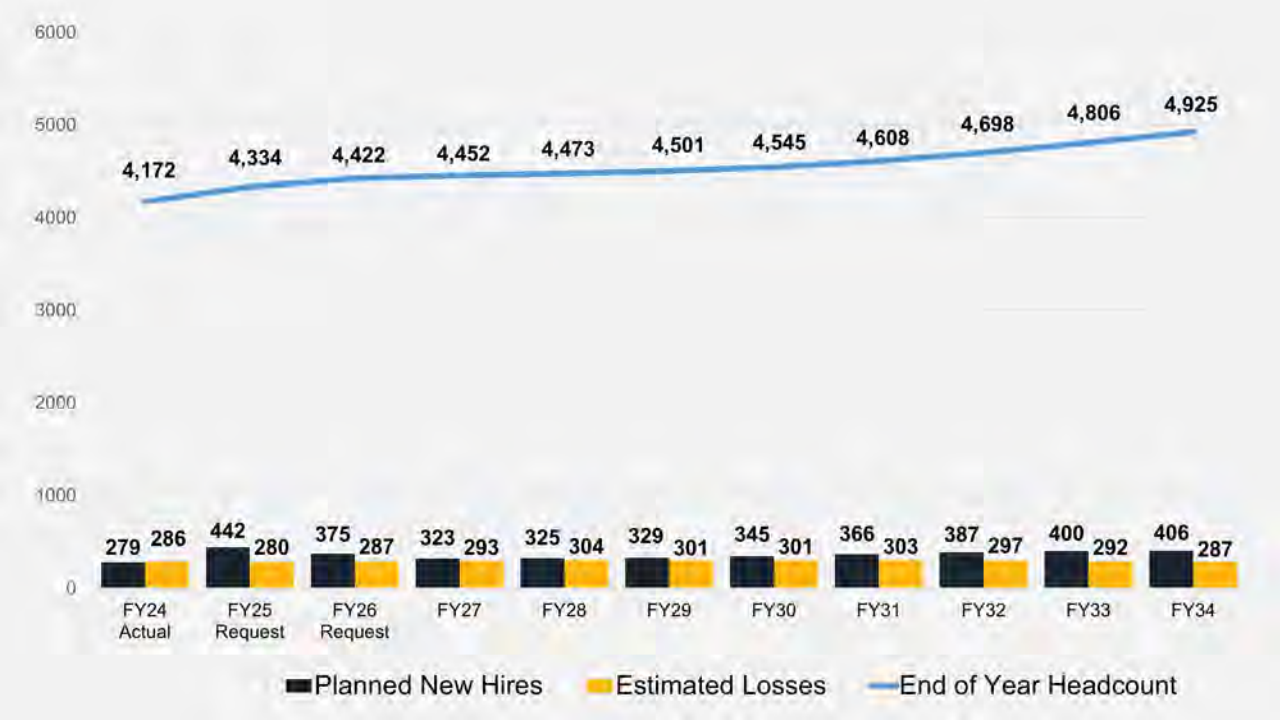


Figure 2: FY 2024 actual staffing level, actual hires, and actual losses, as well as planned staffing levels, planned hires, and estimated losses for FY 2025 through FY 2034 for all ASIs in AVS

[2]ASIs are 1825 occupational series in FS and AIR

ASE[3] Forecast with Planned Hires and Estimated Losses

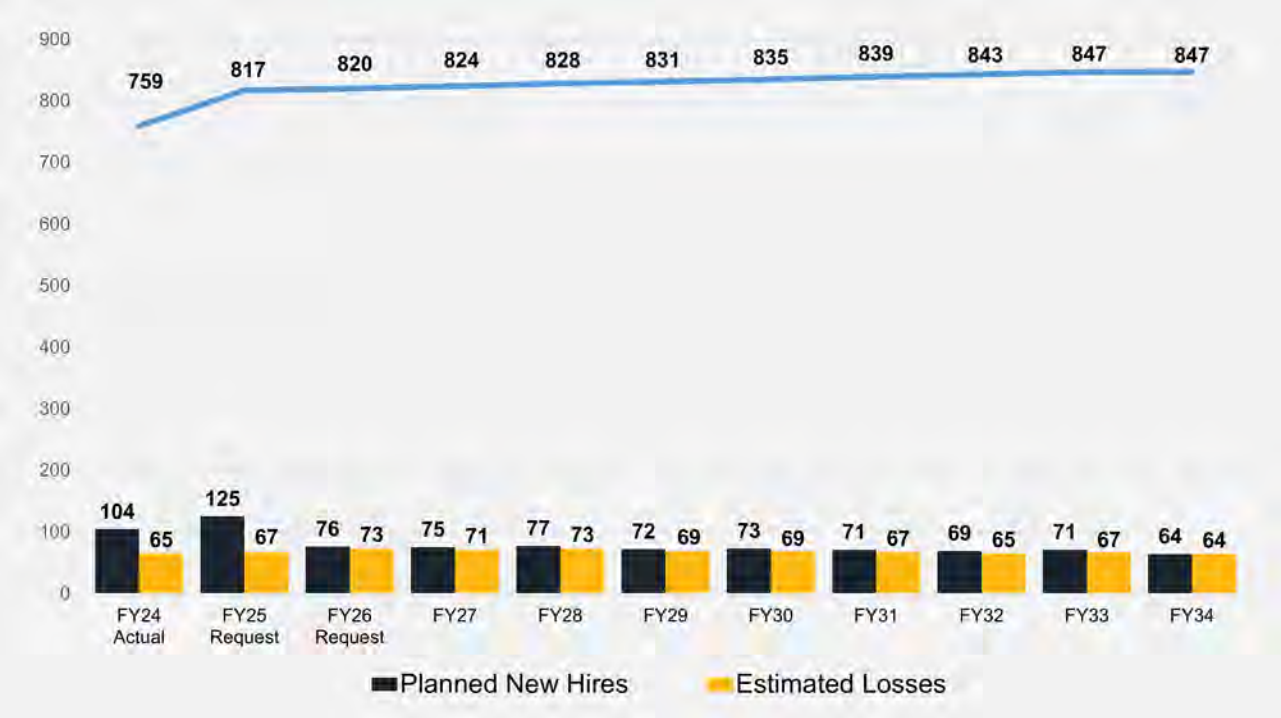


Figure 3: FY 2024 actual staffing level, actual hires, and actual losses, as well as planned staffing levels, planned hires, and estimated losses for FY 2025 through FY 2034 for all ASEs in AVS

[3]ASEs include all 800 (8XX) occupational series in AIR

ASIs and ASEs are in high demand, making for a challenging hiring environment. In FY 2024, AVS hired 279 and lost 286 ASIs, respectively, resulting in a relatively flat ASI headcount year over year. In FY 2025, AVS plans to hire aggressively (442 ASIs) while maintaining historical attrition rates (295 ASI average attrition predicted over the ten-year forecast period).

Planned ASE hiring in FY 2025 is also higher than FY 2024 levels, increasing from 104 ASEs in FY 2024 to 125 in FY 2025 (20 percent increase). Hiring is lower in later years, averaging 77 ASEs over the ten-year period. Attrition, like ASIs, is predicted to remain at historical levels and averages 69 ASEs over the same ten-year period.

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

Non-Supervisory ASIs by Functional Area	FY24 Actuals on Board	FY25 Forecast	FY26 Forecast
General Aviation Safety Assurance	1,599	1,636	1,642
Air Carrier Safety Assurance	989	983	977
Other Manufacturing	186	192	199
Large Transport Manufacturing	49	51	53

Table 1: The number of non-supervisory ASIs by functional area, comparing the actuals on board at the end of FY 2024 to the modeled staffing projections for FY 2025 and FY 2026

Recruiting and Retaining a Skilled Workforce

AVS requires a skilled workforce to deliver on the AVS mission. Our inspectors, engineers, and medical officers, who make up a large part of the 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 43, and the current average age of AVS employees is 54. There is no mandatory retirement age for AVS employees, and attrition analysis shows that a low percentage of employees retire immediately upon becoming eligible. While the 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 Public Safety AVS personnel was 67. Figure 4 shows the historical rates of retirement with respect to the year of eligibility.

Retirement Behavior Profile

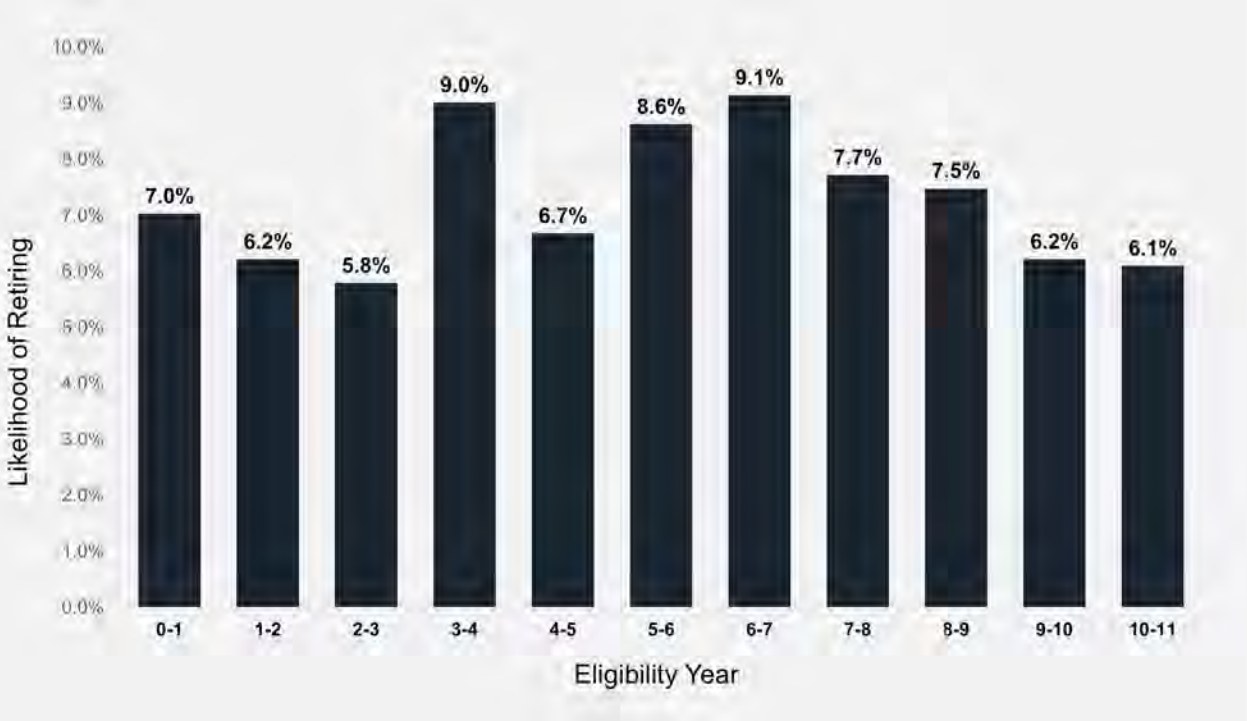


Figure 4: Forecasted percentage of AVS employees expected to retire during each year of retirement eligibility

In FY 2025, 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. The 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.

AVS has a robust recruitment strategy to reach skilled talent. The 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, relocation incentives, and the Medical Officers Premium Pay incentive—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 2024, AVS gained approval to fill non-medical Flight Oversight ASI positions. These positions meet the needs of mission-critical ASI Operations vacancies that do not require operation of an aircraft and have been extremely difficult to fill. We increased the size of the applicant pool by recruiting experienced airmen who no longer possess a second-class medical.

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 mission-critical, Public Safety positions, spanning all levels of required experience, with candidates at varying levels of their professional careers.

Currently, the primary recruitment and hiring vehicle AVS uses is the Office of Personnel Management's automated hiring system, USAJOBS. AVS also uses applicable recruitment resources like the On-the-Spot hiring authority to expedite the process of hiring ASIs and ASEs, as well as medical officers.

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 a number of incentives, such as leave enhancements (included in job announcements), new hire pay flexibilities, and degree completion programs.

- AVS offers a $10,000 relocation incentive (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.
- AVS also offers a $10,000 relocation incentive (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). In addition, AVS offers a new $25,000 recruitment incentive (with a three-year service agreement) to Operations ASIs who accept hard-to-fill positions.
- Medical officers (series 0602) in the FAA may receive the Medical Officers Premium Pay incentive up to $30,000 annually, divided into biweekly payments, as a means of addressing recruitment and retention issues for highly skilled and specialized Medical Officers and for positions with a history of recruitment and/or retention problems.

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 the 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 Public Safety staff 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. Employees with other technical specialties in AVS, such as drug abatement inspectors and air traffic safety inspectors, receive structured, initial technical training specific to their field of expertise.

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. While personnel compensation and benefits consumed 84.7 percent of the AVS FY 2024 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

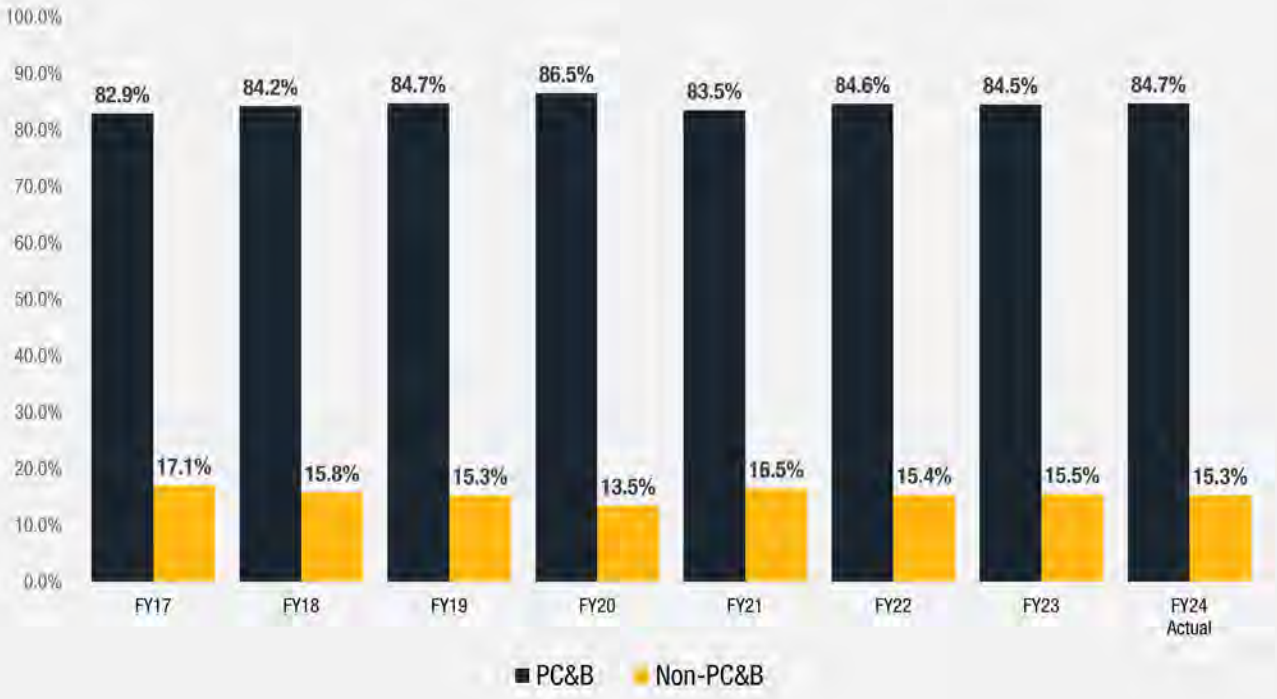


Figure 5: Percentage allotments for PC&B, FY 2017 – FY 2026

FY 2009

FY 2010

FY 2011

FY 2012

FY 2013

FY 2014

FY 2015

FY 2016

FY 2017

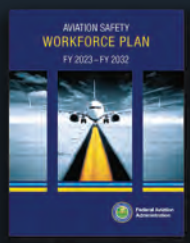
FY 2018

FY 2019

FY 2020

FY 2021

FY 2022



FY 2023

FY 2024

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