Salary Freezes Begin To Thaw, Turnover Rockets Upward

By Mark Hrywna

Salary hikes have been nonexistent for five years at the Tennessee Recreation and Parks Association. The board of the Franklin, Tenn.-based organization agreed last year to award bonuses – only the second time in the 16 years that Candi Rawlins has been with the organization (the last as executive director).

Even though salary studies indicate they’re underpaid by as much as 20 percent, Rawlins had to convince her board to award one-time bonuses to retain staff. “If it’s going to make a difference between keeping and not keeping someone, I really need to be able to do this for this person,” she said she told the board.

Salary freezes have been a common story across the country. But now four years after the national economy began its plunge, some nonprofits are beginning to open the purse strings – at least a little – when it comes to salary increases, for both general staff and executives.

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salaries. The average salary for a mid-level social worker was $41,115, but this time the highest average ($46,779) was at organizations of $2.5 million to $5 million. The mid-level positions also had lower average salaries. The average salary were found at smaller organizations.

The overall average tenure for a chief executive officer, president or executive director in the survey was 11.4 years. Although the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) did not participate in the survey, its most recent CEO was right on target with that average. Steven Sanderson retired last year after 11 years at the Bronx, N.Y.-based organization, though it was shorter than the average 16.3 years at $50-million-plus nonprofits. CEO tenure was longest at the largest organizations, about 21.5 years at groups with budgets of between $25 million and less than $50 million, and at least 14 years at nonprofits with at least $5 million budgets. The shortest tenure was found at nonprofits

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SPECIAL REPORT: NPT SALARY & BENEFITS STUDY

Employee Benefits: Parking And Flextime Top List After Health

By Mark Hrywna

Salary is just one part of the deal when it comes to a job. The types of benefits offered also can have an impact on attracting employees, and some of those benefits can vary widely depending on geography or size of the organization.

Carpooling or a transit subsidy was most popular among charities based in the Northwest, where more than one in eight charities offered it. Overall, less than 7 percent of organizations nationwide made it available. While telecommuting was more popular -- at 24 percent overall -- it was also most popular in the Northwest, found among 40 percent of charities. The Northeast, Southeast and North Central were closer to the average but the Southwest also was higher, at 31 percent.

The 2012 Nonprofit Organizations Salary and Benefits Report by The NonProfit Times in partnership with Roswell, Ga.-based Bluewater Nonprofit Solutions surveyed 1,197 nonprofits of all sizes about their general benefit offerings.

Six benefits were found to be offered by at least 30 percent of respondents: Flextime, 49.27 percent; free or subsidized parking, 40.16 percent; business casual days, 39.15 percent; association/professional society dues, 34.79 percent; Employee Assistance Plan (EAP), 30.6 percent; and, full-time business casual policy, 29.96 percent.

Flextime and business casual days were consistent across the spectrum of budget sizes, with at least 30 percent in every category, and as high as 53 percent.

Other benefits were more likely to be found as the budget scale rose. Less than 5 percent of the smallest organizations (less than $500,000) made EAPs available compared with almost 89 percent of $50-million organizations. The offering was more popular as the charities became larger. While that was not uncommon for certain other benefits, there wasn’t quite the same strong pattern found in EAPs.

A number of benefits were more common at the largest charities when compared with the 1,197 respondents to the survey.

Domestic partner coverage was offered among more than 1 in 4 charities, but that jumped to almost half or more than half among nonprofits with operating budgets of $5 million or more.

Similarly, a new-hire referral bonus was offered at 7 percent of all charities, but that figure doubled among charities with more than $5 million in operating budgets, and at least 35 percent among those with $25 million or more. Organizations of $5 million or more also were considerably more likely to offer financial counseling, almost one of every five, as opposed to the less than 8 percent overall.

The least common benefits found in the survey -- many offered by fewer than one in every 20 nonprofits:

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- Chief Marketing Officer ($117,088); and
- Chief Information Officer ($108,531).

Many of the absolute top paid positions were medical-related:
- Psychiatrist ($169,442);
- Chief Medical Officer ($161,633); and
- Physician ($160,411).

THE EXTRAS

The most popular executive perks for a CEO were a car or car allowance (45 percent), additional vacation days (38 percent) and excess life insurance (27 percent). There was significant drop-off after those three, with travel (38 percent) and excess life insurance (27 percent) cheapest. There were fewer than one in 10 -- and about 7 percent had paid travel expenses for an accompanying spouse.

Of those surveyed, about one in 10 -- and about 7 percent had paid travel expenses for an accompanying spouse.

The National World War I Museum in Kansas City, Mo., historically has focused on providing a comprehensive benefit program for its 28 regular, full-time employees. As many organizations in the for-profit and nonprofit sector are realizing the increased costs of insuring their employees, so is the museum, according to Kim Palmer, human resources manager.

Since its inception in 2006, the museum has been covering the cost for employee health and dental insurance premiums. "We realize that as the new healthcare reforms unfold and if the insurance companies forecasts are correct, this practice very well may change," said Palmer. The museum offers generous paid time off holiday policy, which along with other programs, "help to offset possible competitive salaries offered in the for-profit sector."

The museum had $33 million in total revenue last year. For an organization its size, in the 26 to 50 employee category, survey results indicated that similar organizations paid about 40 percent of the cost for an employee’s Preferred Provider Option (PPO) or Health Maintenance Organization (HMO), but as much as 90 percent for a Point of Service (POS) plan.

CAS offers two medical insurance options for employees, one of which had an increase of about 15 percent the previous year, prompting some consideration of dropping it, Petty said. But with almost 400 employees in that plan it would’ve been too much of a disruption, he said. To minimize the increase they restructured some options within the plan, increasing some co-payments for various benefits so the increased cost to the employee was minimal, actually resulting in a lower premium and some savings in the coming year.

“We got into a lot of those discussions this year with our health insurance broker,” Petty said. On average, the cost sharing for medical insurance at CAS is about 80 percent paid by employer, 20 percent by employee.

The most common benefits for employees in the survey was paid company holidays, offered by nearly 85 percent of respondents, and medical insurance, offered by almost 82 percent of the organizations responding to the survey.

Paid vacation days might seem like a no-brainer, but there must be organizations out there that don’t offer it since about 70 percent of respondents said they do. Paid sick leave, paid bereavement time, dental insurance and a retirement plan all were found to be offered by nearly the same number of organizations, cited by about 64 to 65 percent of respondents.

Other benefits found among roughly half of the organizations surveyed were basic life insurance (55 percent) and flextime (49 percent). Also among the top 10 benefits for employees was employee travel-accident insurance, found at more than 42 percent of charities surveyed.

There aren’t many options for small nonprofits when it comes to healthcare. “It’s just not a high volume enough place to have a plan that really worked,” said McCarthy, of the Teton Raptor Trust. The trust will continue to look into offering its own plan but in the meantime employees will be reimbursed for any costs associated with joining a spouse’s healthcare plan.

“We’re fortunate that employees each have spousal coverage, we can get good plans elsewhere,” she said. The charity was able to add a simple IRA plan last year.

The Tennessee Recreation and Parks Association pays its 100 percent of health premiums for its two staff members, according to Rawlins, but without changes to its coverage in recent years. Monthly premiums are almost $1,600, after moving from a $1,000 deductible to a $2,500 deductible last spring, in addition to eliminating dental, vision and life insurance. As for retirement plans, the full-time employees pay about 3 percent of their salary into a SEP.

To get your event added to the calendar, email it at least eight weeks before the event to: ednch@nptimes.com