



Tempting  
Talent

# Leveraging Secondary Markets to Expand Your Staffing Firm *in 2026*

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# Overview

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**Expanding into suitable regions can determine your firm's success, and tapping into emerging regions will be crucial to expansion plans.**

Up-and-coming areas may offer a sounder investment rather than opening up shop in the traditional staffing hubs of New York or San Francisco. Lower commercial real estate costs, a steady supply of new businesses opening, and a budding population of staffing professionals make for a healthy start when expanding your business.

Our report shares base salary data for associate consultants through director-level professionals pulled from our database of 10,000 professionals. We assess the cost-of-living index against base salaries to understand which regions will be more financially rewarding for candidates, which should, in turn, make talent attraction that bit easier for staffing firms in the region.

# The “secondary markets”, those outside New York City and San Francisco *Include:*

<i>Location</i>	<i>Staffing Population</i>		<i>Staffing Population</i>		<i>Variance</i>	
	<i>2024</i>		<i>2025</i>			
Chicago, Illinois	17,400		18,076		+676	
Atlanta, Georgia	13,700		14,301		+601	
San Diego, California	9,100		9,014		-86	
Charlotte, North Carolina	8,800		8,970		+170	
Austin, Texas	8,500		8,879		+379	
Phoenix, Arizona	8,300		8,838		+538	
Tampa, Florida	7,700		7,845		+145	
Miami, Florida	7,300		7,609		+309	
Denver, Colorado	7,227		7,508		+281	
Boston, Massachusetts	5,500		5,574		+74	
Raleigh, South Carolina	4,300		4,375		+75	
Nashville, Tennessee	3,800		3,900		+100	

## About Tempting Talent:

Tempting Talent builds staffing firms and places professionals from entry-level to C-suite positions. Contact us today if you would like to book a discovery call or a career consultation with our team.

# Contents

## Compensation Benchmarks:

Associate Consultants	5
Consultants	6
Senior Consultants	7
Principal Consultants	8
Managing Consultants	9
Associate Directors	10
Directors	11

## Talent Insights On 12 Staffing Hubs

- Chicago, Illinois
- Atlanta, Georgia
- San Diego, California
- Charlotte, North Carolina
- Austin, Texas
- Phoenix, Arizona
- Tampa, Florida
- Miami, Florida
- Denver, Colorado
- Boston, Massachusetts
- Raleigh, South Carolina
- Nashville, Tennessee



# Associate Consultant 2025

City	Cost of Living Plus Rent Index	Median Salary - Associate Consultant	Ratio
Phoenix	58	\$52,000	897
Raleigh	57.5	\$50,000	870
Charlotte	60.5	\$52,000	860
Austin	59.7	\$50,000	838
Denver	65.9	\$55,000	835
Atlanta	61.9	\$50,000	808
Chicago	68.2	\$55,000	806
Tampa	62.3	\$50,000	803
San Francisco	89.8	\$70,000	780
Nashville	61.7	\$47,000	762
Boston	84.2	\$62,000	736
San Diego	79.6	\$58,000	729
Miami	75.6	\$54,000	714
New York	100	\$65,000	650

# Consultant 2025

City	Cost of Living Plus Rent Index	Median Salary - Consultant	Ratio
Phoenix	58	\$65,000	1121
Charlotte	60.5	\$66,000	1091
Raleigh	57.5	\$60,000	1043
Chicago	68.2	\$69,000	1012
Austin	59.7	\$60,000	1005
Atlanta	61.9	\$60,000	969
Tampa	62.3	\$60,000	963
Denver	65.9	\$62,000	941
Nashville	61.7	\$58,000	940
San Francisco	89.8	\$84,000	935
San Diego	79.6	\$71,000	892
Miami	75.6	\$66,000	873
Boston	84.2	\$72,000	855
New York	100	\$76,000	760

# Senior Consultant 2025

City	Cost of Living Plus Rent Index	Median Salary - Senior Consultant	Ratio
Tampa	62.3	\$85,000	1364
Charlotte	60.5	\$79,000	1306
Phoenix	58	\$70,000	1207
Austin	59.7	\$70,000	1173
Raleigh	57.5	\$67,000	1165
Chicago	68.2	\$78,000	1144
Atlanta	61.9	\$70,000	1131
Denver	65.9	\$71,000	1077
Nashville	61.7	\$65,000	1053
San Francisco	89.8	\$93,000	1035
San Diego	79.6	\$79,000	992
Miami	75.6	\$75,000	992
Boston	84.2	\$79,000	938
New York	100	\$84,000	840

# Principal Consultant 2025

City	Cost of Living Plus Rent Index	Median Salary - Principal Consultant	Ratio
Charlotte	60.5	\$89,000	1471
Chicago	61.7	\$88,000	1426
Raleigh	57.5	\$80,000	1391
Tampa	62.3	\$85,000	1364
Phoenix	58	\$78,000	1345
Austin	59.7	\$80,000	1340
Atlanta	61.9	\$80,000	1292
Denver	65.9	\$82,500	1252
San Francisco	89.8	\$112,000	1247
Nashville	61.7	\$76,000	1232
Miami	75.6	\$88,000	1164
San Diego	79.6	\$92,000	1156
Boston	84.2	\$96,000	1140
New York	100	\$98,000	980

# Managing Principal Consultant 2025

City	Cost of Living Plus Rent Index	Median Salary - Managing Principal Consultant	Ratio
Tampa	62.3	\$105,000	1685
Charlotte	60.5	\$101,000	1669
Phoenix	58	\$95,000	1638
Austin	59.7	\$95,000	1591
Raleigh	57.5	\$91,000	1583
Chicago	68.2	\$107,000	1569
Atlanta	61.9	\$95,000	1535
Denver	65.9	\$98,000	1487
Nashville	61.7	\$89,000	1442
San Francisco	89.8	\$127,000	1414
Boston	84.2	\$115,000	1366
San Diego	79.6	\$107,000	1344
Miami	75.6	\$101,000	1336
New York	100	\$116,000	1160

# Associate Director 2025

City	Cost of Living Plus Rent Index	Median Salary - Associate Director	Ratio
Charlotte	60.5	\$121,000	2000
Tampa	62.3	\$120,000	1926
Phoenix	58	\$110,000	1897
Austin	59.7	\$110,000	1843
Chicago	68.2	\$125,000	1833
Raleigh	57.5	\$103,000	1791
Atlanta	61.9	\$110,000	1777
Denver	65.9	\$113,000	1715
Nashville	61.7	\$101,000	1637
San Diego	79.6	\$130,000	1633
Miami	75.6	\$122,000	1614
San Francisco	89.8	\$139,000	1548
Boston	84.2	\$125,000	1485
New York	100	\$132,000	1320

# Director 2025

City	Cost of Living Plus Rent Index	Median Salary - Managing Principal Consultant	Ratio
Tampa	62.3	\$137,000	2199
Phoenix	58	\$125,000	2155
Charlotte	60.5	\$130,000	2149
Austin	59.7	\$125,000	2094
Raleigh	57.5	\$120,000	2087
Chicago	68.2	\$140,000	2053
Atlanta	61.9	\$125,000	2019
Denver	65.9	\$127,000	1927
Nashville	61.7	\$115,000	1864
San Francisco	89.8	\$165,000	1837
San Diego	79.6	\$145,000	1822
Miami	75.6	\$136,000	1799
New York	100	\$170,000	1700
Boston	84.2	\$140,000	1663

# Understanding the Relationship Between Pay and Place in US Staffing

The relationship between compensation and cost of living continues to shape the strategic landscape for staffing firms across the United States. As the market evolves, firms that understand where their consultants can enjoy stronger financial outcomes will be better positioned to attract, retain, and motivate talent. The findings from this report highlight clear regional patterns that reveal how far a staffing salary really goes in 2025 and where expansion opportunities may lie.

The traditional powerhouses of staffing remain New York and San Francisco. Both cities still command premium base salaries at every level, reflecting the scale of enterprise clients, the concentration of high-value industries, and the established infrastructure of large staffing brands. Yet even as these cities dominate headline numbers, they deliver the weakest salary-to-cost-of-living ratios across every seniority bracket. An Associate Consultant earning \$65,000 in New York or \$70,000 in San Francisco sees much of that advantage offset by living costs that are nearly double the national index. For staffing professionals, the real return on income is lower than in most secondary markets. For staffing firms, this creates competitive pressure on margins and makes hiring at scale more difficult.

By contrast, markets such as Phoenix, Charlotte, Tampa, and Raleigh offer a different picture. These regions combine healthy salary levels with much lower living costs, resulting in stronger disposable income and overall satisfaction for employees. Phoenix consistently ranks among the most financially rewarding cities for staffing professionals, with Associate Consultants, Consultants, and Managing Consultants all enjoying higher real-value ratios than their peers in major coastal hubs. The same pattern holds true for Charlotte, where a Consultant's salary of \$66,000 paired with a moderate cost-of-living index gives one of the highest effective returns in the country.





This trend toward secondary markets is no longer speculative. Data from 2024 to 2025 shows measurable growth in staffing populations in almost all emerging cities. Chicago remains the largest of these with over 18,000 staffing professionals, but Atlanta, Austin, and Phoenix are seeing faster relative increases. This migration of talent is supported by a mix of factors: lower office rents, attractive tax environments, and the decentralization of client demand. As clients continue to diversify geographically, staffing firms are following suit, investing in local markets where teams can scale without the cost burdens of traditional headquarters cities.

From an employee perspective, the cost-of-living analysis highlights how career progression interacts with regional economics. At junior levels, the difference between markets is particularly stark. An Associate Consultant in Phoenix earning \$52,000 sees a much higher real return than a counterpart in New York on \$65,000. But as consultants rise in seniority, high-cost regions begin to narrow the gap. Directors in New York and San Francisco, while paying more for day-to-day life, also see absolute compensation reach levels that sustain competitiveness. Yet even at those senior levels, the most favorable ratios remain in smaller or mid-tier markets, where compensation growth outpaces cost-of-living increases.

For staffing firms, this balance should inform location strategy. Secondary markets allow firms to provide competitive salaries that deliver genuine lifestyle advantages to employees while maintaining healthier operating margins. For instance, in Charlotte and Tampa, Managing Principal Consultants earn around \$100,000 to \$105,000, translating to some of the strongest ratios nationwide. These professionals can command strong performance and remain financially content, helping firms reduce attrition. Meanwhile, in Boston and San Francisco, comparable roles exceed \$110,000 to \$127,000 but yield weaker returns once housing and living costs are factored in.

Another important takeaway is the emergence of regional specialization. While New York and San Francisco remain home to high-end corporate and financial staffing, markets such as Austin and Raleigh are increasingly associated with technology, engineering, and healthcare recruitment. This diversification benefits both candidates and employers, giving staffing professionals more choice in how they align their expertise with local economies. It also broadens the potential client base for firms willing to expand or relocate teams.

The data suggests that 2026 will continue to favor firms that take a pragmatic approach to growth. Rather than competing purely on headline salaries in expensive markets, successful staffing firms will compete on real value. They will emphasize cost-effective locations, sustainable compensation structures, and career pathways that align with regional economic realities. For candidates, the message is similar. The most rewarding move may not be to the city offering the highest base pay, but to the one where that pay stretches furthest.

This shift also influences culture and retention. Markets where professionals can maintain a good standard of living without financial strain tend to see higher satisfaction and lower turnover. Cities such as Raleigh and Phoenix show some of the lowest attrition rates in the data, supporting the idea that affordability plays a meaningful role in long-term engagement. For firms looking to build stable teams or launch new offices, these factors offer a clear strategic advantage.













# Talent *insights*

# Chicago, Illinois

<i>Staffing Population</i>	<i>Liquidity</i>	<i>Staffing Population</i>	<i>Liquidity</i>
2024	2024	2025	2025
17,400	12%	18,076	12%















## 2025 Largest Staffing Firms by Headcount:

<i>Company</i>	<i>1 year Growth</i>	<i>Attrition</i>
Elite Staffing	12% 	2% 
Robert Half	4% 	14% 
Addison Group	6% 	11% 
Insight Global	3% 	13% 
Aerotek	2% 	7% 

## 2025 Top Schools Producing This Talent:

- 01 University of Phoenix
- 02 Arizona State University
- 03 Towson University
- 04 Michigan State University
- 05 Penn State University

## Chicago Salaries

<i>Junior</i>	<i>2024</i>	<i>2025</i>
Title	Base Salary	Base Salary
Associate Consultant	\$55,000 	\$60,000 
Consultant	\$66,000 	\$69,000 
Senior Consultant	\$78,000 	\$78,000 
Principal Consultant	\$86,000 	\$88,000 
Managing Principal Consultant	\$106,000 	\$107,000 
<i>Senior</i>	Salary	Salary
Associate Director	\$124,000 	\$125,000 
Director	\$135,000 	\$140,000 

# Atlanta, Georgia

## Staffing Population

2024

13,700

## Liquidity

2024

12%

## Staffing Population

2025

14,301

## Liquidity

2025

12%

## 2025 Largest Staffing Firms by Headcount:

Company	1 year Growth	Attrition
Insight Global	4%	14%
Randstad USA	1%	11%
Soliant	-5%	25%
Robert Half	8%	12%
LocumTenens	0.6%	15%

## 2025 Top Schools Producing This Talent:

- 01 Georgia State University
- 02 The University of Georgia
- 03 Kennesaw State University
- 04 Georgia Southern University
- 05 Georgia Institute of Technology

## Atlanta Salaries

### Junior

Title	2024 Base Salary	2025 Base Salary
Associate Consultant	\$50,000	\$50,000
Consultant	\$60,000	\$60,000
Senior Consultant	\$70,000	\$70,000
Principal Consultant	\$80,000	\$80,000
Managing Principal Consultant	\$95,000	\$95,000

### Senior

Title	2024 Salary	2025 Salary
Associate Director	\$110,000	\$110,000
Director	\$125,000	\$125,000

# San Diego, California

## Staffing Population

2024
9,100

## Liquidity

2024
11%

## Staffing Population

2025
9,014

## Liquidity

2025
11%

## 2025 Largest Staffing Firms by Headcount:

Company	1 year Growth	Attrition
Aya Healthcare	-2% ↓	7% ●
AMN Healthcare	-6% ●	10% ●
Insight Global	-3% ↓	26% ●
Aerotek	1% ↓	6% ●
Eastridge Workforce Solutions	-11% ●	19% ●

## 2025 Top Schools Producing This Talent:

- 01 San Diego State University
- 02 UC San Diego
- 03 University of San Diego
- 04 California State University San Marcos
- 05 San Diego Mesa College

## San Diego Salaries

### Junior

Title	2024 Base Salary	2025 Base Salary
Associate Consultant	\$58,000	\$58,000
Consultant	\$71,000	\$71,000
Senior Consultant	\$79,000	\$79,000
Principal Consultant	\$92,000	\$92,000
Managing Principal Consultant	\$107,000	\$107,000

### Senior

Title	2024 Salary	2025 Salary
Associate Director	\$130,000	\$130,000
Director	\$145,000	\$145,000

# Charlotte, North Carolina

Staffing Population	Liquidity	Staffing Population	Liquidity
2024	2024	2025	2025
8,800	14%	8,970	12%

## 2025 Largest Staffing Firms by Headcount:

Company	1 year Growth	Attrition
Aya Healthcare	2% ↓	10% ●
Insight Global	13% ●	10% ●
Robert Half	-2% ↓	17% ●
Aerotek	-0.8% ↓	6% ●
Randstad USA	8% ●	12% ●

## 2025 Top Schools Producing This Talent:

- 01 University of North Carolina at Charlotte
- 02 Central Piedmont Community College
- 03 University of South Carolina
- 04 East Carolina University
- 05 Appalachian State University

## Charlotte Salaries

Junior Title	2024	2025
	Base Salary	Base Salary
Associate Consultant	\$52,000	\$54,000
Consultant	\$64,000	\$66,000
Senior Consultant	\$77,000	\$79,000
Principal Consultant	\$89,000	\$89,000
Managing Principal Consultant	\$101,000	\$101,000
Senior Title	Salary	Salary
Associate Director	\$119,000	\$121,000
Director	\$127,000	\$130,000

# Austin, Texas

## Staffing Population

2024
8,500

## Liquidity

2024
17%

## Staffing Population

2025
8,879

## Liquidity

2025
16%

## 2025 Largest Staffing Firms by Headcount:

Company	1year Growth	Attrition
Vaco	-16% <span style="color: red;">●</span>	32% <span style="width: 32%; display: inline-block; background-color: #003366; height: 10px;"></span>
Insight Global	11% <span style="color: blue;">●</span>	24% <span style="width: 24%; display: inline-block; background-color: #003366; height: 10px;"></span>
Barton Associates Inc	-15% <span style="color: red;">●</span>	32% <span style="width: 32%; display: inline-block; background-color: #003366; height: 10px;"></span>
Robert Half	1% <span style="color: blue;"> </span>	17% <span style="width: 17%; display: inline-block; background-color: #003366; height: 10px;"></span>
Aerotek	3% <span style="color: blue;"> </span>	12% <span style="width: 12%; display: inline-block; background-color: #003366; height: 10px;"></span>

## 2025 Top Schools Producing This Talent:

- 01 The University of Texas at Austin
- 02 Texas State University
- 03 Austin Community College
- 04 Texas A&M University
- 05 Texas Tech University

## Austin Salaries

### Junior

Title	2024 Base Salary	2025 Base Salary
Associate Consultant	\$50,000 <span style="width: 30%; display: inline-block; background-color: #003366; height: 10px;"></span>	\$50,000 <span style="width: 30%; display: inline-block; background-color: #003366; height: 10px;"></span>
Consultant	\$60,000 <span style="width: 35%; display: inline-block; background-color: #003366; height: 10px;"></span>	\$60,000 <span style="width: 35%; display: inline-block; background-color: #003366; height: 10px;"></span>
Senior Consultant	\$70,000 <span style="width: 40%; display: inline-block; background-color: #003366; height: 10px;"></span>	\$70,000 <span style="width: 40%; display: inline-block; background-color: #003366; height: 10px;"></span>
Principal Consultant	\$80,000 <span style="width: 45%; display: inline-block; background-color: #003366; height: 10px;"></span>	\$80,000 <span style="width: 45%; display: inline-block; background-color: #003366; height: 10px;"></span>
Managing Principal Consultant	\$95,000 <span style="width: 55%; display: inline-block; background-color: #003366; height: 10px;"></span>	\$95,000 <span style="width: 55%; display: inline-block; background-color: #003366; height: 10px;"></span>

### Senior

Title	2024 Salary	2025 Salary
Associate Director	\$110,000 <span style="width: 60%; display: inline-block; background-color: #003366; height: 10px;"></span>	\$110,000 <span style="width: 60%; display: inline-block; background-color: #003366; height: 10px;"></span>
Director	\$125,000 <span style="width: 65%; display: inline-block; background-color: #003366; height: 10px;"></span>	\$125,000 <span style="width: 65%; display: inline-block; background-color: #003366; height: 10px;"></span>

# Phoenix, Arizona

## Staffing Population

2024
8,300

## Liquidity

2024
14%

## Staffing Population

2025
8,838

## Liquidity

2025
13%

## 2025 Largest Staffing Firms by Headcount:

Company	1 year Growth	Attrition
Vaco	-16% <span style="color: red;">●</span>	32% <span style="width: 32%; display: inline-block; background-color: #002060; height: 10px;"></span>
Insight Global	11% <span style="color: blue;">●</span>	24% <span style="width: 24%; display: inline-block; background-color: #002060; height: 10px;"></span>
Barton Associates Inc	-15% <span style="color: red;">●</span>	32% <span style="width: 32%; display: inline-block; background-color: #002060; height: 10px;"></span>
Robert Half	1% <span style="color: blue;"> </span>	17% <span style="width: 17%; display: inline-block; background-color: #002060; height: 10px;"></span>
Aerotek	3% <span style="color: blue;"> </span>	12% <span style="width: 12%; display: inline-block; background-color: #002060; height: 10px;"></span>

## 2025 Top Schools Producing This Talent:

- 01 Arizona State University
- 02 Grand Canyon University
- 03 University of Phoenix
- 04 University of Arizona
- 05 Northern Arizona University

## Phoenix Salaries

### Junior

Title	2024 Base Salary	2025 Base Salary
Associate Consultant	\$51,000 <span style="width: 40%; display: inline-block; background-color: #002060; height: 10px;"></span>	\$52,000 <span style="width: 42%; display: inline-block; background-color: #002060; height: 10px;"></span>
Consultant	\$62,000 <span style="width: 50%; display: inline-block; background-color: #002060; height: 10px;"></span>	\$65,000 <span style="width: 53%; display: inline-block; background-color: #002060; height: 10px;"></span>
Senior Consultant	\$69,000 <span style="width: 56%; display: inline-block; background-color: #002060; height: 10px;"></span>	\$70,000 <span style="width: 58%; display: inline-block; background-color: #002060; height: 10px;"></span>
Principal Consultant	\$78,000 <span style="width: 65%; display: inline-block; background-color: #002060; height: 10px;"></span>	\$78,000 <span style="width: 65%; display: inline-block; background-color: #002060; height: 10px;"></span>
Managing Principal Consultant	\$92,000 <span style="width: 77%; display: inline-block; background-color: #002060; height: 10px;"></span>	\$95,000 <span style="width: 80%; display: inline-block; background-color: #002060; height: 10px;"></span>

### Senior

Title	2024 Salary	2025 Salary
Associate Director	\$107,000 <span style="width: 80%; display: inline-block; background-color: #002060; height: 10px;"></span>	\$110,000 <span style="width: 82%; display: inline-block; background-color: #002060; height: 10px;"></span>
Director	\$119,000 <span style="width: 88%; display: inline-block; background-color: #002060; height: 10px;"></span>	\$120,000 <span style="width: 90%; display: inline-block; background-color: #002060; height: 10px;"></span>

# Tampa, Florida

Staffing Population	Liquidity	Staffing Population	Liquidity
2024	2024	2025	2025
8,300	14%	8,838	13%

## 2025 Largest Staffing Firms by Headcount:

Company	1 year Growth	Attrition
Sunbelt Staffing	-9%	30%
Amergis Healthcare Staffing	54%	14%
The Fountain Group	6%	1%
Maxim Healthcare Staffing	-5%	9%
Aya Healthcare	12%	10%

## 2025 Top Schools Producing This Talent:

- 01 University of South Florida
- 02 Florida State University
- 03 Hillsborough Community College
- 04 University of Tampa
- 05 University of Florida

## Tampa Salaries

Junior	2024	2025
Title	Base Salary	Base Salary
Associate Consultant	\$50,000	\$50,000
Consultant	\$60,000	\$60,000
Senior Consultant	\$73,000	\$73,000
Principal Consultant	\$85,000	\$85,000
Managing Principal Consultant	\$105,000	\$105,000
Senior	Salary	Salary
Associate Director	\$120,000	\$120,000
Director	\$137,000	\$137,000

# Miami, Florida

## Staffing Population

2024

7,300

## Liquidity

2024

15%

## Staffing Population

2025

7,609

## Liquidity

2025

13%

## 2025 Largest Staffing Firms by Headcount:

Company	1year Growth	Attrition
Robert Half	2%	14%
Adecco	78%	4%
Ultimate minds U.S	-10%	14%
Maxim Healthcare Staffing	2%	0%
HealthTrust Workforce Solutions	8%	5%

## 2025 Top Schools Producing This Talent:

- 01 Miami Dade College
- 02 Florida International University
- 03 University of Miami
- 04 Florida State University
- 05 University of Florida

## Miami Salaries

### Junior

Title

Associate Consultant

Consultant

Senior Consultant

Principal Consultant

Managing Principal Consultant

### 2024

Base Salary

\$54,000

\$66,000

\$75,000

\$86,000

\$99,000

### 2025

Base Salary

\$54,000

\$66,000

\$75,000

\$88,000

\$101,000

### Senior

Title

Associate Director

Director

Salary

\$118,000

\$136,000

Salary

\$122,000

\$136,000

# Denver, Colorado

## Staffing Population

2024

7,227

## Liquidity

2024

13%

## Staffing Population

2025

7,508

## Liquidity

2025

13%

## 2025 Largest Staffing Firms by Headcount:

Company	1year Growth	Attrition
Robert Half	0%	11%
Aya Healthcare	5%	8%
Insight Global	7%	15%
LaborMax Staffing	21%	4%
Bradsby Group	3%	22%

## 2025 Top Schools Producing This Talent:

- 01 University of Colorado Boulder
- 02 Metropolitan State University of Denver
- 03 Colorado State University
- 04 University of Colorado Denver
- 05 University of Denver

## Denver Salaries

### Junior

Title	2024 Base Salary	2025 Base Salary
Associate Consultant	\$55,000	\$55,000
Consultant	\$62,000	\$62,000
Senior Consultant	\$71,000	\$71,000
Principal Consultant	\$82,500	\$82,500
Managing Principal Consultant	\$98,000	\$98,000

### Senior

Title	2024 Salary	2025 Salary
Associate Director	\$113,000	\$113,000
Director	\$127,000	\$127,000

# Boston, Massachusetts

## Staffing Population

2024

5,527

## Liquidity

2024

13%

## Staffing Population

2025

5,574

## Liquidity

2025

14%

## 2025 Largest Staffing Firms by Headcount:

Company	1year Growth	Attrition
Robert Half	-1% ↓	13% ●
Insight Global	-1% ↓	25% ▬
Michael Page	10% ●	14% ●
Aya Healthcare	-10% ●	27% ▬
Motion Recruitment	-13% ●	38% ▬

## 2025 Top Schools Producing This Talent:

- 01 Northeastern University
- 02 University of Massachusetts Amherst
- 03 Boston University
- 04 UMass Boston
- 05 Boston College

## Boston Salaries

### Junior

Title	2024 Base Salary	2025 Base Salary
Associate Consultant	\$60,000	\$62,000
Consultant	\$71,000	\$72,000
Senior Consultant	\$78,000	\$79,000
Principal Consultant	\$96,000	\$96,000
Managing Principal Consultant	\$115,000	\$115,000

### Senior

Title	Salary	Salary
Associate Director	\$125,000	\$125,000
Director	\$140,000	\$140,000

# Raleigh, North Carolina

Staffing Population	Liquidity	Staffing Population	Liquidity
2024	2024	2025	2025
4,300	15%	4,375	12%

## 2025 Largest Staffing Firms by Headcount:

Company	1year Growth	Attrition
SPECTRAFORCE	17%	5%
Weatherby Healthcare	5%	18%
Insight Global	4%	12%
Robert Half	1%	16%
Aerotek	-2%	3%

## 2025 Top Schools Producing This Talent:

- 01 North Carolina State University
- 02 Wake Technical Community College
- 03 East Carolina University
- 04 University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- 05 University of North Carolina Wilmington

## Raleigh Salaries

Junior Title	2024	2025
	Base Salary	Base Salary
Associate Consultant	\$47,000	\$50,000
Consultant	\$58,000	\$60,000
Senior Consultant	\$65,000	\$67,000
Principal Consultant	\$76,000	\$80,000
Managing Principal Consultant	\$89,000	\$91,000
Senior Title	Salary	Salary
	2024	2025
Associate Director	\$101,000	\$103,000
Director	\$115,000	\$120,000

# Nashville, Tennessee

Staffing Population	Liquidity	Staffing Population	Liquidity
2024	2024	2025	2025
3,800	15%	3,900	13%

## 2025 Largest Staffing Firms by Headcount:

Company	1 year Growth	Attrition
HealthcareTrust Workforce Solutions	-1% <span style="color: red;"> </span>	10% <span style="color: blue;">●</span>
Insight Global	13% <span style="color: blue;">●</span>	13% <span style="color: blue;">●</span>
Aya Healthcare	0%	13% <span style="color: blue;">●</span>
Robert Half	-3% <span style="color: red;"> </span>	10% <span style="color: blue;">●</span>
Express Employment International	-2% <span style="color: red;"> </span>	6% <span style="color: blue;">●</span>

## 2025 Top Schools Producing This Talent:

- 01 Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU)
- 02 University of Tennessee, Knoxville
- 03 Belmont University
- 04 The University of Alabama
- 05 Tennessee State University

## Nashville Salaries

Junior Title	2024	2025
	Base Salary	Base Salary
Associate Consultant	\$47,000 <span style="color: blue;">▬</span>	\$47,000 <span style="color: blue;">▬</span>
Consultant	\$58,000 <span style="color: blue;">▬</span>	\$58,000 <span style="color: blue;">▬</span>
Senior Consultant	\$65,000 <span style="color: blue;">▬</span>	\$65,000 <span style="color: blue;">▬</span>
Principal Consultant	\$76,000 <span style="color: blue;">▬</span>	\$76,000 <span style="color: blue;">▬</span>
Managing Principal Consultant	\$89,000 <span style="color: blue;">▬</span>	\$89,000 <span style="color: blue;">▬</span>
Senior Title	Salary	Salary
Associate Director	\$101,000 <span style="color: blue;">▬</span>	\$101,000 <span style="color: blue;">▬</span>
Director	\$115,000 <span style="color: blue;">▬</span>	\$115,000 <span style="color: blue;">▬</span>

# Regional Insights: A Shifting Map of Opportunity

Chicago remains the nation's largest staffing hub outside New York, home to more than 18,000 professionals and a deep ecosystem of national and boutique firms. Growth here has been steady rather than spectacular, suggesting a mature market with stable liquidity. Atlanta, however, continues to display stronger momentum, buoyed by its expanding corporate base and growing technology and healthcare sectors. Its ability to combine large-enterprise clients with a competitive cost base makes it a magnet for both firms and experienced recruiters.

Further west, Austin and Phoenix have emerged as two of the most dynamic markets in the data. Both cities reported growth in staffing headcount and show healthy liquidity rates of 13 to 16 percent, an indicator of active hiring and talent movement. These markets reflect the broader decentralization of the staffing workforce, with professionals drawn to high-growth economies that offer better living conditions and lower costs.

In the southeast, Charlotte and Tampa demonstrate similar potential. Each city combines modest salary increases with sustainable attrition levels and a consistent influx of new graduates from local universities. Charlotte in particular benefits from its position as a financial and technology hub, while Tampa's healthcare and professional services markets have expanded steadily. Miami, though smaller, shows signs of maturity with a rising number of high-value placements and a growing professionalized candidate base.

The western seaboard tells a more complex story. San Diego, while remaining an attractive place to live, recorded minimal staffing growth and moderate attrition among mid-sized firms. High operating costs and talent competition from remote opportunities have tempered expansion. Denver and Boston show similar stabilization, signaling markets that remain important but less fertile for new entry. Raleigh and Nashville, however, stand out as smaller but fast-rising contenders. Both offer affordable operating costs and strong feeder schools producing new staffing talent, positioning them as promising growth markets heading into 2026.





# Strategic Outlook and Advice for 2026

The coming year will likely mark a period of consolidation and calculated expansion across US staffing. After several years of post-pandemic growth and geographic diversification, firms are now expected to take a more deliberate approach to scaling, prioritizing regions with sustainable economics and strong workforce pipelines.

For firms considering expansion, secondary markets continue to present the best blend of opportunity and stability. Cities like Phoenix, Raleigh, and Charlotte combine healthy growth trajectories with favorable salary-to-cost-of-living ratios, giving firms the ability to attract consultants who are financially secure and motivated. These regions also offer untapped client potential, particularly in healthcare, technology, and professional services, where local demand is increasing but competition for staffing services remains moderate.

Existing offices in major metros should not be neglected, but strategy will matter. In high-cost cities such as New York, San Francisco, and Boston, maintaining a physical presence remains valuable for brand credibility and client proximity. However, firms should consider hybrid workforce models, satellite support functions in lower-cost locations, and a greater focus on margin protection rather than aggressive headcount growth.

Retention will be a decisive factor in 2026. Attrition data across the markets suggests that firms with clear progression pathways and transparent compensation structures retain staff more effectively, especially in mid-tier markets where competition for talent is rising. Firms should review reward structures to ensure that bonuses and career progression reflect both performance and local market conditions.

Technology investment will continue to differentiate firms. Markets with strong liquidity, such as Atlanta and Chicago, are likely to see accelerated adoption of AI-driven sourcing, data analytics, and automation tools. The challenge for firms will be integrating these capabilities without compromising the relationship-driven culture that remains central to successful staffing.

Finally, the best-performing firms in 2026 will be those that combine data with local insight. Understanding not only where salaries and costs align but also where professional networks, universities, and client industries intersect will create the most resilient growth models.

# Contact *us*:

Tempting Talent specializes in building Staffing firms, placing professionals from entry level positions to C-suite.

If you would like to book a discovery call or a career consultation with our team, please contact us on the details below.



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